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IDEAS FROM A BALANCED "FAMILY":

THE FOUNDING AND PRACTICE OF A TEACHER COLLABORATION

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IDEAS FROM A BALANCED "FAMILY":

THE FOUNDING AND PRACTICE OF A TEACHER COLLABORATION

by

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DEDICATION

To those who, despite bearing the greater burden, provided the most support:
my wife, Lan Huong, and my five-year-old, Vanessa Hoa.

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IDEAS FROM A BALANCED "FAMILY":
THE FOUNDING AND PRACTICE OF A TEACHER COLLABORATION

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Teachers practicing their profession in isolation, rather than in collaboration, remains a powerful, embedded tradition in American education. Researchers, also under the presumption of teachers isolated in classrooms, have directed few studies that develop or understand teacher collaboration, especially among general education teachers. In response to these circumstances, this study examined the context, content, characteristics, roles, challenges, and patterns, including time usage, of how three teachers founded and practiced their collaboration.

The central participants in this case study were three teachers at a public charter school in central Texas, each teaching a K-1 class within the same specially designed classroom. From a constructivist perspective, I focused on how these teachers conducted their collaborative endeavors. Accordingly, I used naturalistic inquiry (Erlandson, et al., 1993) aimed at capturing the current and retrospective perspectives of the participants (via interviews), and which included participant-observation (fieldnotes and digital recordings of the teachers' discussions) and relevant documents to augment data generation and triangulation procedures. I analyzed data inductively using mostly

constant comparison and an interactive, iterative, and recursive consideration of data. My process with participants was collaborative, fostering substantive participant input and decisions from start to finish of the study. My portrayal of this teacher collaboration and its context followed Foley's (2002) eclectic approach for producing "realist narratives" (p. 487).

The chief findings from this study included how the three teachers: (1) practiced an unequal, yet balanced and satisfactory (to the teachers) exercise of power in their decision-making related to their collaborative endeavors; (2) created and employed a foundation of "familial collegiality" to support their generation and planning of ideas in relation to their curriculum and instruction, (3) the teachers established and developed complementary roles from the outset that helped them to sustain their long-term collaboration, (4) as they discussed ideas, the teachers conducted a modified version of a "reach-test" cycle, and (5) apportioned their time between collaborative tasks and relational activities in a ratio of five-to-one.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES & TABLES ……..….. xiii

CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION ……..……..…… 1

RESEARCH CONTEXT & ISSUES ……... 2
RESEARCH QUESTIONS ……..... 5
INITIAL DEFINITIONS & WORKING HYPOTHESES …….……..... 7
GOALS & PURPOSES ……... 10
SIGNIFICANCE ……..…… 12
POSITIONING IN RELATION TO TEACHER COLLABORATION…….…..... 13
PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE …….. 14
PERSONAL EXPERIENCE ……... 17
LESSONS LEARNED ……..…….. 18
CHAPTER SUMMARY ……..… 20

CHAPTER TWO LITERATURE REVIEW …….. 22

PART A: SITUATING TEACHER COLLABORATION **……** 23
PERSPECTIVES REGARDING TEACHER COLLABORATION…….……..... 23
QUALIFIED SUPPORT …….. 25
MEANING & USAGE …….. 28
CONDITIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS FOR SUCCESS OR FAILURE …. 31
PART B: A SENSITIZING FRAMEWORK …….…… 37
HARGREAVES: A "MOVING MOSAIC" & "TENSIONS" ……..… 38
DIPARDO: A "FLOWING STREAM" ……..... 39
ERICKSON: "MUTUAL HELP" …….. 40
JOHN-STEINER: "CREATIVE COLLABORATION" ……..… 42
SUMMARY OF THE LITERATURE ……..……..... 43

CHAPTER THREE PARADIGM, METHODS, AND PROCEDURES ….....… 45

A CONSTRUCTIVIST FOUNDATION TO QUALITATIVE INQUIRY …… 46
SETTING ……. 47
PARTICIPANTS ……. 50
QUALITATIVE RESEARCH APPROACH: NATURALISTIC INQUIRY ……. 51
CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING STUDY QUALITY …….. 53
TRUSTWORTHINESS ……... 53
Credibility …… 54
Triangulation ……. 54
Prolonged Engagement ……..... 55
Persistent Observation …….. 55
Member Checks ……. 56
Peer Debriefing ……. 56
Reflexive Journal ……... 56

Transferability 56
Audit Trail 57
AUTHENTICITY 58
ETHICAL TREATMENT OF PARTICIPANTS 61
Research Protocol 61
Fairness 65
DATA GENERATION 66
METHODS 67
Participant-Observation 68
Fieldnotes & Audio Recordings 70
Interviews: Individual & Focus Group 72
Documents & Artifacts 74
ANALYSIS: TRANSFORMING DATA 75
CONSTANT COMPARISON 76
Unitizing Data 76
Emergent Code Designation 77
Bridging & Extending Data 77
TEXTUAL FRAMEWORK 78
DEMARCATIONS 79
RESEARCHER-AS-INSTRUMENT 80
ETIC-EMIC POSITION 81
CHAPTER SUMMARY 84

CHAPTER FOUR FOUNDING TEACHER COLLABORATION 86

PART A: SCHOOL, CLASSROOM, AND TEACHERS 88
ESTABLISHING A NEW SCHOOL 88
Curriculum & Instruction 92
Decision-Making 94
Relating to Teachers 98
SECTION SUMMARY 102
THE K-1 CLASSROOM 103
SECTION SUMMARY 108
THE K-1 TEACHERS 109
Heather James 110
Margret Miller 113
Katerina Yost 118
SECTION SUMMARY 121
PART B: PREPARING FOR TEACHER COLLABORATION 123
HEATHER'S FIRST YEAR AT PCS 124
HEATHERS VISION 130
COMING TOGETHER 134
SECTION SUMMARY 135
CHAPTER SUMMARY 136

CHAPTER FIVE THEIR PRACTICE OF TEACHER COLLABORATION 138

PART A: "ALL IN THE TRENCHES TOGETHER" 139
GETTING TOGETHER 139
FIRST MEETINGS 141
FIRST WEEK OF SCHOOL 150
SECTION SUMMARY 154
PART B: WHAT, WHEN, & HOW MUCH 155
CONTENT AREAS 155
TIME & TEACHER COLLABORATION 157
When & How Much Time? 159
Variations 165
SECTION SUMMARY 167
PART C: DEVELOPING A COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIP 169
GETTING COMFORTABLE 169
CARING 170
SHARING POWER 172
Ego 174
CREATING "SPACES" 175
KEY QUALITIES 177
Personality 178
Intelligence & Perspective-Taking 178
"Sensing Each Other's Needs 179
DEVELOPING COLLABORATIVE ROLES 180
PARENT ROLES 183
SECTION SUMMARY 184
PART D: WORKING ON CURRICULUM & INSTRUCTION 185
FIGURING OUT & DOING TASKS 186
Discussions 187
Before Each Bloc 188
Science & Social Studies 195
Cave Project 196
Field Trips 200
Saigon Market 203
Big Group: A Joint Improvisational Presentation 213
Learning Centers 216
Parent Letter: A Critical Incident 219
DESCRIBING TEACHER COLLABORATION 223
Changes over Time 224
Levels of Collaboration 227
SECTION SUMMARY 228
PART E: SUPPORTING TEACHER COLLABORATION 229
MAKING THINGS "LIGHTER" 230
SUPPORT FROM ADMINISTRATION 231

SECTION SUMMARY 232
CHAPTER SUMMARY 233

CHAPTER SIX DISCUSSION & CONCLUSIONS 237

FINDINGS 237
ADDRESSING QUESTION #1 239
ADDRESSING QUESTION #2 240
ADDRESSING BOTH QUESTIONS 251
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS 255
Characterized By 255
The Context 256
Major Findings 256
CONCLUSIONS 257
REVISITING THEORY 259
Hargreaves: A "Moving Mosaic" 259
DiPardo: A "Flowing Stream" 261
Erickson: "Mutual Help" 261
John-Steiner: "Creative Collaboration" 262
CHALLENGES TO TEACHER COLLABORATION 268
GESTALT: IDEAS FROM A BALANCED "FAMILY" 270
Balancing the Pressure to Perform 271
Balancing Power 272
Balancing Their Interrelationships 274
Collaboration as an Ecosystem 274
ADDING TO THE LITERATURE 276
IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE 279
LIMITATIONS 280
DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH 281
FINAL SUMMARY 282

APPENDICES 284

APPENDIX A: PCS, TEACHERS, & RESEARCH TIMELINE 285
APPENDIX B: INITIAL EXAMPLES, NON-EXAMPLES AND LEVELS OF TEACHER COLLABORATION 286
APPENDIX C: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS 288
APPENDIX D: EXAMPLE OF TRANSCRIPT & CODING IN ATLAS-TI 289
APPENDIX E: AFFINITY CATEGORIES FROM IQA FOCUS GROUP 290
APPENDIX F: CONSENT LETTER FROM THE PRINCIPAL OF PCS 291
APPENDIX G: INFORMED CONSENT LETTER 292
APPENDIX H: A WRITTEN OUTLINE FOR BLOC THREE OF 2003-2004 297

REFERENCES 298

VITA 307

LIST OF FIGURES & TABLES

Figure 1: A Schematic of the K-1 Classroom ……... 105
Figure 2: The Interdependence of "Tasks of Collaboration" and "Familial Collegiality" ……. 278

Table 1: Average Time Spent Daily in Teacher Collaboration and as a Percentage of Collaboration ……...….. 163

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

In July of the 2002-2003 school year, I was a K-1 teacher at the Pathways Community School[1] (PCS), a fifth-year, year-round charter school in central Texas. I was soon struck, along with many of the other teachers, administrators, and parents, by how unique and harmonious the environment seemed to be for teaching three classes in the large K-1 classroom at the new campus. Often times, I would walk in to find the three K-1 teachers sitting in a circle on student tables, rapt in conversation. In what earlier had seemed like a cold, cavernous classroom, I started wondering: "How did these teachers organize (what appeared to my early education sensibilities) this inviting environment? How are they handling three separate classes in the same classroom? Why are they spending so much time together? Why do they seem so harmonious together? What's the story here?" Their context and practice seemed so different from other teachers I had observed teaching alone during my visits at elementary schools across the country. After resigning my position at PCS in August of 2002, and stemming from my passion for exceptional teacher practices, my curiosity about these teachers and their environment became the spark for undertaking a year-long case study into what the teachers termed "collaboration." As a result of my initial experience and interest, I focused my inquiry upon how these three teachers founded and practiced their collaboration.

My purpose in this chapter is to ground the reader in the direction and rationale of this study. I argue in each of the following sections for how I focused my inquiry, namely

[1]Pseudonyms were used for proper names in order to protect participant anonymity.

via the relevant context and problems associated with this research, my research questions, initial definition, and working hypotheses regarding teacher collaboration, my goals and purposes, significance of this study, and lastly, through my positioning as a researcher. In this last section I introduce the reader to my experience in relation to teachers and collaboration. I want readers to know more about my research role – sooner rather than in later chapters, in order to afford a greater opportunity to reflect upon and assess the ways in which I made choices for designing and conducting this inquiry, beginning with its context and the problems that it addresses, and continuing through to my conclusions.

Research Context & Problems

Tradition is a powerful influence in any system of education. Teachers practicing their profession in isolation, rather than in collaboration, has remained a powerful, embedded tradition in American education (Achinstein, 2002; DiPardo, 1999; Goodlad, 1984). This tradition has guided most school architects, policymakers, teacher educators, administrators, and teachers in how they view and shape classroom design and practice (Goodlad, 1984). Initially researched in the 1960's (Lortie, 1964; Kagan, 1991), research into teacher collaboration since then has been limited. Due in part to the enduring practice of isolating teachers in classrooms, teacher collaboration has made only tentative advances into schools (Englert & Tarrant, 1995; Erickson, 1989; Hargreaves, 1994; Kagan, 1991; Kent, 1987; Leonard & Leonard, 1999). Acceptance and implementation of teacher collaboration in schools and teacher education programs has been problematic from the start due to a lack of clarity about its purpose, structure, and the way in which it

should function (Goodlad, 1984; Jackson, 1968; Little, 1990; Lortie, 1975). Teacher collaboration appears to be an idea that makes sense for the classroom, but for many reasons has been seldom used or used ineffectively, including difficulties in sharing power, resolving conflict, and creating a sense of community (Feiman-Nemser & Floden, 1986; Hargreaves, 1994; Kagan, 1991; Lortie, 1975).

Building and practicing collaboration has become a social imperative in the twenty-first century, particularly so in a world of increasing and frightening polarities. As educator Kenneth Bruffee wrote, we live in an era of "necessary interdependence" (1993, p. 172). Since the mid-1980s, education has experienced a renewed interest in fostering a sense of community and collaborative endeavors as a means to counter teacher isolation, advance pedagogy, and improve student learning (Barth, 1990; Carnegie, 1986; Johnson, 1990; Lieberman & Miller, 1984; Rosenholtz, 1989; Sergiovanni, 1994). Many studies about teacher collaboration have focused on hierarchical rather than horizontal structures or collegial relationships in an institutional context (Bredo, 1977; Hargreaves, 1994; Kagan, 1991). Most of the current research closely related to the setting of this study has focused on team teaching in an inclusion (special education) context (e.g., Friend & Cook, 1992; Thomas, 1992). Here, collaboration is recognized as a valued approach for team teaching (Lortie, 1964; Thomas, 1992), as well as for problem-solving and achieving difficult goals (Bredo, 1977; Hargreaves, 1994; Kagan, 1991; Little, 1987). Most of the research on team teaching has occurred in a general education classroom with a general education teacher and a special education teacher, and traditionally has focused on how a team can be more effective (Lortie, 1964; Kagan, 1991; Thomas, 1992).

Much of what has been written about teacher collaboration and collaboration in general is of the prescriptive type, advising, yet with little or no empirical basis. Moreover, researchers have only recently engaged the voices in tandem with their study of teachers who collaborate. Collaboration research has usually taken place at the school level (e.g., Hargreaves, 1994; Erickson & Christman, 1996), or among dyads other than teacher-to-teacher (e.g., Erickson, 1989). Finally, the existing literature differs markedly from my study context. For example, Bauwens and Hourcade (1995) presented the case for collaborative teacher-to-teacher dyadic relationships in the classroom, and from an inclusion perspective. Three teachers working together, as opposed to two, is a very different proposition in terms of relationship dynamics (Wilson, 1996). Thus, the tradition of isolated teachers, difficulties with implementing teacher collaboration, and a lack of relevant literature, in this case, studies that looked at general education teachers collaborating in a single classroom, became the context and relevant issues that my inquiry sought to address. Hence, this study is aimed at extending those empirical works that have looked at collaboration, while adding theory based upon an examination of teacher collaboration in a unique context: three general education teachers, each assigned to a class of sixteen K-1 students, conducting their profession within the confines of one large classroom.

In such a case as this, my response to a unique and under explored context is analogous to that of Jefferson and the Lewis and Clark expedition: an exploration of a vast, new territory, with the main intention to identify and describe important features of the landscape and the inhabitants (in this case, collaboration and the teachers), which

could then suggest areas for greater inspection and analysis. In similar fashion, following Hatch's (2002) advice, my inquiry was broad, yet also detailed and analytic, requiring systematic, rigorous methods, and prolonged investigation (the same being true of the Lewis and Clark fieldnotes and report). Thus, my inquiry in this case may act as a springboard for future studies to explore in greater detail some of the more salient or potent aspects of teacher collaboration. The foregoing context and issues in relation to teacher collaboration served to situate this study and led me to develop the following research questions, initial definitions, and working hypotheses.

Research Questions

Research questions were the nexus of this study, the only component that tied directly to all the other elements of design (Maxwell, 1996). They gave direction to my inquiry and helped to define and bound the territory of teacher collaboration under consideration. Because my basic study context is unique, because teacher collaboration research is in a nascent stage, and in order to portray a somewhat broad yet detailed picture of teacher collaboration for my main audience, teacher educators, teachers, and school administrators, I reasoned that it was appropriate to ask basic, broad questions which, in turn, provided a fertile medium for emergent inquiry.

For the reasons above, I applied Hatch's (2002) notion of developing questions that were "open-ended, few in number, and stated in straightforward language" (p. 43). Drawing on the empirical work of DiPardo (1999), Clandinin and Connelly (1995), and John-Steiner (2000) as the primary theoretical tools for framing this inquiry into teacher collaboration, and in response to the isolation of teachers, a lack of literature germane to

this teacher collaboration, and in order to fit my goals, the participants, and setting, my guiding "grand tour" (Creswell, 1998) question became: "How do people come together and work together in the same space?" Such a grand tour question also suggests implications not only for teachers, but for other contexts as well (other educational contexts, families, health organizations, government, or the business world). The two research questions I addressed for this case study were necessarily narrower in scope, and acted as focal lenses during data generation and analysis:

I. How did this teacher collaboration appear to be founded?

II. How did the teachers appear to practice this teacher collaboration?

I chose specific ways of wording these questions for specific reasons. For example, I used "collaboration" for its connotative power, instead of the gerund form, "collaborating," which is more connotative of a specific process that occurs—in this instance, the teachers collaborating to generate and plan their curriculum. Instead, the teachers and I chose to bound this study as a teacher "collaboration" because the noun connotes a multi-faceted, larger endeavor than just "collaborating." While the teachers did engage in collaborating, their collaboration was so much more. And while focusing on collaboration would have been simpler in many ways, undertaking an examination of their collaboration was a more timely way to capture the richness, complexity, and interrelationships of their unique context and practice.

I used the term "appear" to reflect my assumptions of multiple realities and my reliance on subjective observations and participant perspectives. I assumed in turn that the story I would tell was only one of many interpretations that might be constructed

about the context, practices, and people under study. Accordingly, I designed such appearances to be gathered chiefly through two data generation methods, interviews and participant-observation, and shaped through interactive and inductive analysis.

Initial Definitions and Working Hypotheses

I defined and formulated hypotheses about teacher collaboration chiefly on the basis of my literature review and my experience (which also has a basis in the literature) with collaboration. Hence, I separate below the sources of my definition in two broad ways: Part One is from my broad literature review; Part Two, on the other hand, while derived in part from literature sources, mostly reflects my personal and professional experiences with collaboration. (I describe my literature bases for these definitions in Chapter Two, while I reveal my contributions and their sources in the last section of this chapter.) While both parts have a basis vis-a-vis my review of the literature, Part Two is different and in some ways contradicts Part One. Thus, I arrived at a dual definition of teacher collaboration:

> **Part One:** An interactive, negotiated process that enables teachers with diverse expertise to work together as equals and engage in shared decision making toward mutually defined goals and purposes. This process requires, in some measure, that teacher identities, teacher knowledge, and a teacher/school context act in ways that facilitate and support collaboration; characterized by parity in the exercise of power; equal sharing of resources, responsibilities, and accountability, and a preference

for informality over formality; with authentic support from school administration.

Part Two: A phenomenon that relies upon mutually agreed guidelines or specifications for how to work together; where all participants have a high interest level in learning about the subject matter at hand; where one mutually accepted leader orchestrates most of the details, usually offering ways to resolve difficulties along the way.

Of special note is a significant contradiction between the two parts. This contradiction occurs where Part One posits a "parity in the exercise of power," as opposed to Part Two, which describes an unequal distribution of power, mostly in the hands of a "mutually accepted leader." Part One is a synthesis of theories about collaboration, while Part Two reflects my experience with collaborative endeavors. Such a contradiction in the definition of collaboration, along with warrantable evidence, made the issue of power one of the focal points of my inquiry. As part of my initial research design, I also developed examples and non-examples of practicing teacher collaboration that I used to help guide my data generation and analysis (Appendix B).

Flowing from the research questions and initial definitions, working hypotheses in naturalistic inquiry are also meant to interact with data generation and analysis; to evolve interactively and in concert with my observations and interviews. Such an interactive process is designed to lead to the "forming of a gestalt" (Erlandson, et al., 1993, p. 113), a symbolic unified whole whose properties cannot be derived from a mere sum of its parts, at the end of the inquiry. With this goal in mind and with my intention to revisit

hypotheses in the last chapter in conjunction with my research questions and definitions of teacher collaboration, I developed the following working hypotheses:

1. Founding this teacher collaboration meant that:
    a. each teacher would choose to be in this type of classroom;
    b. the teachers were prepared to collaborate;
    c. the school would provide authentic support for their collaboration;
2. Their practice of teacher collaboration meant that:
    a. the teachers would plan effectively together;
    b. the teachers would make agreements about collaboration and then follow through;
    c. the teachers would develop relationships that fostered getting along with one another on a long-term basis;
    d. each teacher would have to play a role that satisfied both the individual and the collaboration;
    e. the teachers would have to work out who exercised what power, in what way, and in what measure;
    f. it would take additional time to collaborate, and in a sense compete with giving time to individual teaching objectives and tasks;
    g. the teachers would spend less time collaborating as time progressed;
    h. the teachers would have to face and resolve certain drawbacks or problems in working together.

Interacting with an emergent data corpus, my research questions, initial definitions, and working hypotheses about the phenomenon were aimed at developing a more comprehensive framework for data generation and analysis. Constructing such a triune conceptualization of teacher collaboration acted as a framework to help me recognize diverse avenues and angles into the phenomenon, especially at the beginning of inquiry. The following section serves to further ground the reader by explaining my goals and purposes for this inquiry.

Goals & Purposes

My inquiry into teacher collaboration was motivated in part by what I viewed as an overly strict adherence to training and placing teachers for practice in isolated classrooms. Ironically, this view places me in somewhat of an isolated position. Upon reviewing literature for this study (Chapter Two), I found few empirical studies that were related to and none that featured the fundamental context of the one I encountered. Given my unique study context, and in tandem with a small body of literature in the area of teacher collaboration, my main goal was to construct an alternative classroom story and theory for educators and policymakers to consider. Hence, my aim in this case study was to render a "thick" description, as well as to contribute to theory-building in the area of teacher collaboration. My specific tasks, therefore, entailed understanding in detail how three elementary teachers appeared to found and practice their collaboration; to render the complexity and richness of their collaboration, as well as to offer, in relation to relevant research, a foray into substantive theory germane to this collaboration and possibly similar contexts.

Animated by these goals, my initial purpose in this study was to generate knowledge and understanding about this unique, untapped form of teacher collaboration. In order to accomplish this, I chose to focus upon three teachers individually and as a group, including how they founded and practiced their collaboration (following Connelly and Clandinin, 1999, Dipardo, 1999, and John-Steiner, 2000). This focus included their proximal context, including their history and relationship to collaboration, as well as those of the school, K-1 classroom, and members of the school's administration (following Hargreaves, 1994). One of my assumptions about this teacher collaboration, though not totally without evidence, was that it was a good one—that it was successful. Thus, warranting its success was not the intention or direction of this inquiry. Instead, my aim was to produce a descriptive case study of the phenomenon of teacher collaboration, seeking *what* transpired in this setting, which also included *how* the teachers did it.

My second purpose was to structure a text that addressed a combined audience of education scholars, practitioners, and administrators. Because such an audience represents a wide swath of interests and lexical practices, I chose a textual format that was highly accessible, yet one that could also convey complexity and meaning: a story, and in this case, a retelling of a story about how people and context became interwoven via the perspectives and practices that constructed this teacher collaboration. While I deviate at times from the strict conventions of storytelling, I (Therrell, 2000) and others (e.g., Ayers, 1989; Connelly & Clandinin, 1999; Wolcott, 1973), for the reasons above, have found narrative forms such as the story to be a potent heuristic device, especially in writing up study findings. Ultimately, how my intended audience understands the text

and what they do with their understanding of this teacher collaboration relies upon their judgments. My hope is to provide an adequate, if not persuasive means for making such judgments.

A third purpose was to give voice to those at the frontier of founding and practicing teacher collaboration, the teachers themselves. Teachers, while included more often, still remain at the margin of educational research and policy decisions. In order to afford the teachers a more potent voice, I embarked with them on a collaborative journey of inquiry. The teachers are the ones who chose the destination for this study, teacher collaboration. I gave them access to all data, codes, and drafts of the manuscript, and I asked them for alternative analyses along the way. In retelling their story, I tried to use their voice at every appropriate turn in the text. My final purpose was to flesh out and clearly reveal who I was as the main facilitator in the conduct of this inquiry, the "researcher-as-instrument" and its implications for data generation and analysis. With such purposes in mind, I turn now to the ways in which this study was significant.

Significance

First, unlike the data and results generated in much of the teacher collaboration research, this study sought to add to the literature another context in which teacher collaboration occurred. Second, because the literature indicates that teacher collaboration is a relatively new area for research, this study may serve to further a nascent understanding of teacher collaboration, especially in the way that general education teachers share the same space. Having such an understanding may help to facilitate more informed perceptions about attitudes and skills, as well as to help reveal the intricacies,

efficacies, and challenges related to teacher collaboration. Such understandings from this inquiry may also have transferability to similar contexts. Third, examining teacher collaboration may help to illuminate an important area of school practice and dialogue that is tacit or misunderstood (Spindler & Spindler, 1987), or perhaps lead to a revision of teacher collaboration (Hargreaves, 1994). Lastly, a description and examination of teacher collaboration, if it offers a more informed portrait or vision for educators and policymakers, may help to foster what Hargreaves (1994) calls "a sense of wholeness in our threatened schools" (p. 235), or, failing that, may help instead to problematize the construct and foreground other avenues for developing theory and practice.

Each of the previous sections points the reader in the direction of this study and provides a rationale for such direction. But this study was not blindly directed, nor do I expect the reader to follow its direction blindly. Opening up the process of this inquiry to a fuller view requires clarification of my role, "researcher-as-instrument," in order for the reader to see and better understand the choices I made throughout this study.

My Positioning in Relation to Teacher Collaboration

My conceptualization of and relation to teacher collaboration were not drawn *deus ex machina,* but rather from sources that require explanations, which, in turn, are meant to afford clearer connections to the ways in which I conducted data generation and analysis. Explicating the sources that helped me to form and focus my initial conceptualization of teacher collaboration became vital to my research process of interweaving data generation, analysis, and theory-building in a recursive and iterative manner.

The ways in which I relate to teachers and collaboration were pivotal for this naturalistic study. Accordingly, now and at appropriate junctures throughout the study, I have endeavored to clarify my roles in the inquiry process. I begin with an important admission. Partly as a consequence of believing in multiple, socially constructed realities, readers should know that this study was largely driven by my values. A suspicion always arises for me when the values of the "researcher-as-instrument" are not revealed, or at least not clearly so. As a budding connoisseur in my reading of research, I am always interested in what guides and motivates the researcher, and these appear to be chiefly in the form of values (often in the form of a political agenda).

I drew my initial conceptualization of teacher collaboration from my experience with professional and personal collaborative endeavors, and the lessons learned from such endeavors. The following expose is not meant to act as a complete statement of researcher-as-instrument (which I revisit in chapter three), but rather as a brief synopsis in order to portray those experiences related to teacher collaboration that were most meaningful to my process of inquiry. What I reveal also alerts the reader to weaknesses and omissions, as well as my strengths and preferred foci in relation to teacher collaboration.

Professional Experience

My experience with collaboration has been mainly as a teacher. Over a span of twenty-four years I have taught a variety of age levels in several different contexts: a private preschool, a K-1 classroom at a public charter school, all grade levels at a private high school, and undergraduates at two different state universities, as well as online for a

private university. Because I view my preferred mode of teaching as mostly collaborative, one of the first pre-hire topics I've inquired about in these contexts has pertained to the type and degree of collaboration practiced by teachers and administration. For instance: "How and by whom will I be supported as a new teacher, that is, who will I be working with to "learn the ropes" and become successful here? What are the examples here of practices that embody collaboration? Is collaboration a part of a focused effort to create a dynamic school community?" What I did not inquire about involved areas like teacher personality and identity, focusing instead on practice and process. These are the type of questions and insights that entered into my way of initially seeing and thinking about teacher collaboration. In addition, one of my recent collaborations included work as the principal author, along with three subcontractors, on the 2002 "Age Determination Guidelines: Relating Children's Ages to Toy Characteristics and Play Behavior" for the United States Consumer Product Safety Commission. I have also acted as a co-researcher on several studies for playground manufacturers. These were research experiences that were successful in large part because of the effective leadership of one person. Leadership was not rotated and power was distributed hierarchically. When power was subject to struggle, one clear leader emerged, though with negative short-term and long-term ramifications for collaboration and the product that resulted.

My recent teaching experience at Pathways Community Schooling (PCS) served as a compelling motivation to conduct research in the area of teacher collaboration. As a K-1 teacher at a sister site in the beginning of the 2002-2003 school year, I was placed in

a shared space with another K-1 teacher. Having trained in the curriculum and philosophy of PCS since May of 2002 (a total of 2 and half months), I had envisioned a collaborative approach to the building of a dynamic school community at this sister site. Despite the rhetoric for collaboration, the process of opening and operating this sister site was much more like "everyone for themselves." I recorded in my teaching journal only a handful of collaborative experiences over the course of the first month of school. (With great sadness I resigned my teaching position after only two weeks of school, primarily for health reasons, staying on another two and half weeks to facilitate a transition with a new teacher.) At present this sister site may be a viable school community and practice daily collaboration, but my experience there seemed more like a teacher working largely in isolation – with the potential for collaboration ever present and ever enticing.

The most salient and meaningful part of my experience was observing, as a normal part of my interaction between the two school sites, marked differences in the ways that teachers structured and practiced in their respective shared classrooms. Whereas my experience in a shared classroom seemed more isolative than collaborative, the three K-1 teachers in the shared classroom at the main campus were working together in diverse ways with a much different tenor—one that I would describe as upbeat, energetic, and supportive. At the risk of sounding clichéd, it also seemed like a happy, cheery place, full of good will and intentions. The behavior of these three teachers seemed to be congruent with such tenor, especially as they worked together to design and construct their shared learning centers in one of the common areas of the classroom.

Personal Experience

In a real sense, I've focused upon collaborative practices throughout more than twenty years of close relationships. Over these years I've reflected upon how my personal relationships have been founded, practiced, and sustained, chiefly in the arena of significant others. I've been in successful and unsuccessful relationships and wondered frequently about why their results were different. I've learned a great deal from unsuccessful relationships. For example, different values and practices can quickly become reasons for frustration, yet not sufficient bases for perpetual discord or break up. My failures at relationships have chiefly involved, on the part of at least one partner, either a lack of flexibility or commitment, a lack of clear roles or mutual goals, and/or an almost perpetual struggle for how power was enacted in the relationship. I and/or my partner did not successfully address these challenges.

On the other hand, my marriage, which others and I would call successful, has effectively addressed these challenges. It is not without frustration, yet I would characterize our relationship as mostly harmonious. It was not an easy endeavor. My wife is an immigrant from Vietnam, so English is her second language. Having significantly different backgrounds and languages has been a challenge in it self. In many areas we express markedly different values and practices, yet we have been successful in negotiating our relationship. While not equal in many areas, my wife and I hold a high level of commitment and practice flexibility. We are focused on mutually constructed goals, have developed roles for the conduct of our household, raising children, and with each other, and for the most part equally share power in our decision-making. While there

are misunderstandings and disagreements, we afford each other a high degree of acceptance. We could strive for more timely and clear communications, yet both realize that perfection in this area is more an ideal rather than a strident expectation. We also realize that our differences act as balancers in our relationship. My wife is more serious, while I am more playful. Hence, I'm learning the benefits of being more serious in given situations, while she's learning the benefits of being more playful. If both of us acted serious most of the time, we might implode or explode over time, whereas being more playful helps us to relax more and perhaps widen our perspective on the relationship.

Lessons Learned

I have learned through such teaching, research, and personal experience that collaboration is a multi-faceted endeavor wrought with complexity and potential pitfalls. These experiences were both satisfying and frustrating. Satisfactory results appeared to me to be mostly dependent upon the particular individuals and context. The collaborative experiences that created higher satisfaction and better outcomes for both people and project were the ones that started out with or quickly developed clear and mutually agreed upon objectives, guidelines, or specifications for how to work together and complete the objectives, where all participants had a high interest level in learning to work with one another, that had one mutually accepted leader who orchestrated any details or refereed difficulties along the way, and that such leadership was rotated and shared in varying degrees by the participants.

Together with my previous experiences, including becoming familiar with the relevant literature, the marked differences between my successful and unsuccessful

experiences helped me to identify some of my key biases for this research. For example, I really enjoy being part of a collaborative endeavor. I see collaboration as way to attain better results, especially for teachers. My experience tells me that a well-constructed collaboration is more likely to produce positive, synergistic results, as well as happier and more fulfilled participants. I view successful collaborations as having more flexible, personable, communicative, and collegial participants. Lastly, I harbor a hope that the impact of collaboration for teaching may be in reduced teacher attrition (in particular for inductees) and the development of better teaching practices (DiPardo, 1999), which, in turn, could lead to students who are better educated.

In short, I am an ardent supporter of teacher collaboration. From the beginning I realized the need to guard against generating data or analyses that only supported my viewpoint, or that romanticized the write-up. I attempted to be vigilant in searching for negative cases, and to be aware of implementing, in some fashion, a rhetoric of conclusions (Schwab, 1962). Hence, I made efforts to ensure that my research design would emphasize consideration of negative cases, competing theories, and different interpretations of data. For example, I offered my developing analysis and drafts of the manuscript to the teachers and my peer study colleagues over the course of the study, using this, among other ways, to increase trustworthiness of the study.

Chapter Summary

In an effort to address the issues of individualism in education, namely that of teachers being trained and placed in isolated classrooms, investigating three general education teachers and their collaborative endeavor in a large classroom became the

setting and focus of my inquiry. While striving to create knowledge and understanding about teacher collaboration, focusing in particular on how it was founded and practiced, my purpose also included writing a text that was accessible to practitioners and administrators, and in doing so, to make sure that I empowered the teachers in the research process and their voice in the text.

As we saw, inquiry into collaboration is a timely focus for research, and in this case, an important one for teachers and schools. Developing an understanding of this teacher collaboration through describing the context and examining the ways in which it was founded and practiced, could prove useful to scholars, teachers, and administrators. Such understanding may move teacher collaboration toward greater credibility as an effective practice, and in particular, as a viable practice in the context of a shared classroom, perhaps persuading those who actively participate in formal education, whether in university teacher education programs, schools, or other professional development contexts, to consider incorporating teacher collaboration into the pedagogical training of teachers. This, in turn, might lead educators and policymakers to consider promulgating or supporting classrooms where teachers may collaborate, especially in the closely related contexts of early or elementary education. I also initiated a critical look at my unique "researcher-as-instrument" position, including my experiential knowledge that helped, in conjunction with the other components of my research process, to develop and define my conceptualization of teacher collaboration.

The literature review that follows also helped to shape the way I examined teacher

collaboration, eventually shaping, as well, the ways in which I added theory to the literature.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

After briefly situating the phenomenon of teacher collaboration in the introduction (mostly via "Research Context and Issues"), in Part A of this chapter I turn to literature that helps to further locate this study in relation to theory, namely that which examines: (1) how various theoretical perspectives account for teacher collaboration, (2) how researchers have approached teacher collaboration, (3) qualified support for teacher collaboration, (4) the meaning and usage of teacher collaboration, and (5) the conditions and characteristics of teacher collaboration. Then, in Part B, I review four studies that establish the theoretical framework I used to describe and explain the substance of this teacher collaboration, thus affording readers a critical way to connect to this study. Hence, Part B became the sensitizing theoretical framework that I employed for generating data and for my subsequent efforts at analysis. I also reviewed literature that ran counter to my findings, which compelled me to respond in different ways regarding my generation of data and their analyses. The inclusion of both affirming and disaffirming literature helped me to situate this study and further frame my understanding of this teacher collaboration in relation to theory. Structuring the literature review in these ways helped me to add to the emerging discourse of teachers working together, in this case, regarding the founding and practice of a teacher collaboration (e.g., Bredo, 1977; Calderon, 1999; DeBevoise, 1986; Englert & Tarrant, 1995; Erickson, 1989; Hargreaves, 1994; Kagan, 1991; Leonard & Leonard, 1999; Little, 1987; Malone, Gallagher & Long, 2001; Porter, 1987; Showers, 1985; Smyth, 1991; Thomas, 1992).

Part A: Situating Teacher Collaboration

Gregory Bateson (1972), responding to his young daughter's many queries, counseled: "There are more ways which you call 'untidy' than there are ways which you call 'tidy'" (p. 3-4). Such untidiness is also true of the study of teacher collaboration in classrooms. Below, I further situate teacher collaboration, focusing on that research most applicable to teacher collaboration among general education teachers. In the following section, I explore the question: What are the perspectives that researchers have taken in regard to the study of teacher collaboration?

Perspectives Regarding Teacher Collaboration

Thinking broadly, and in keeping with my constructivist perspective, I relied upon Vygotsky's (1986) notion that thinking is embedded within a cultural and historical milieu. A substantive part of his work (1978) focused on how activities have social origins, where there exists a dynamic interdependence of social and individual processes that leads to a co-construction of knowledge through cultural tools and artifacts, and where ideas and processes emerge from joint activity, which may then be appropriated, or internalized by an individual, and become a basis for subsequent development. Elaborating upon Vygotsky's ideas, Mikhail Bakhtin, a literary critic and contemporary of Vygotsky's, provided a sense of what interdependence means from the individuals perspective: "I cannot do without the other; I cannot become myself without the other; I must find myself in the other, finding the other in me" (in Wertsch, 1998, p. 116). I also found useful the expressions of interdependence as intersubjectivity (Newson & Newson, 1975) and as mutual appropriation (John-Steiner, 2000). Vygotsky's and Bakhtin's

notions of interdependence played an important role in how I conceptualized teacher collaboration, prompting me to pursue in my investigation both retrospective and current perspectives from the participants, which also follows Vygotsky's insistence (which he arrived at through Hegel and Marx) that the essence of any phenomenon be apprehended through a study of its origin and history.

Recently, other studies of collaboration with a sociocultural perspective have focused on identities, relationships, and context. Studies that typify such emphases include DiPardo (1999) and John-Steiner (2000). DiPardo's (1999) study focused on two general education teachers working with a single class, and John-Steiner's (2000) study looked at creative collaborations among dyads and small groups, which also incorporated a focus on context. She found four collaborative patterns (distributed, complementary, family, and integrative) and their attendant characteristics, which provided useful ways for me to compare and contrast this teacher collaboration. I will further outline these works in Part B of this chapter.

Theoretically, teacher collaboration has been approached, on the one hand, typically from either Bronfenbrenner's (1979) holistic, ecological perspective (used in Kagan, 1991), or from the view of sociocultural theory (John-Steiner, 2000; Vygotsky, 1986; Wertsch, 1985) where individuals, families, schools, communities, and larger societal structures are interwoven (e.g., DiPardo, 1999). Hargreaves (1994), on the other hand, argues from a postmodern perspective where collaboration within schools is viewed within the context of "a postmodern world which is fast, compressed, uncertain, diverse and complex" (p. 235). In particular, diversity and rapid change make consensus

or reduction of ambiguity about teacher collaboration an elusive goal (Calderon, 1999; Goodlad, 1984; Little, 1990; Thomas, 1992). In addition, researchers have not focused on general education teachers working together due in part to the tradition of teachers working in relative isolation in their classrooms. Despite widespread talk about collaboration, most institutions of higher education still train and expect teachers to practice in mostly autonomous ways, and teacher education programs invest little if any time in the workings of collaboration or its benefits for classroom or school improvement (Perrone & Traver, 1996).

Irrespective of perspective, researchers and educators have developed little "tidiness," or consensus concerning the definition, founding, practice, or context of teacher collaboration (Kagan, 1991). In response to the studies above, my approach drew from both a sociocultural viewpoint and Bronfenbrenner's ecological perspective, thinking of my unique study context as rooted within a certain history and enacted as a phenomenon within a type of ecosystem.

In the following section, I explore why teacher collaboration has become a phenomenon worthy of educational practice and inquiry, as well as the sources of resistance to it.

Qualified Support

What is somewhat tidy about teacher collaboration is its increasing appeal and support found in educational reform circles and society at large. Advocacy for teacher collaboration derives from several broader trends. For example, many believe that models of collaboration from the workplace might help to better inform and shape similar

processes in school (Siegel & Byrne, 1994; Wirth, 1992). The educational reform movement valorizes the importance of utilizing teachers as problem solvers, change agents, and collaborators (Englert & Tarrant, 1995). Teacher collaboration has gained support over the last twenty years as an effective means for moving theory into practice and for deriving theory from practice that results in instructional and school improvement (Leonard & Leonard, 1999; Little, 1987). Even broader, concepts similar to collaboration like "interdependence" and "community" have gained wider appeal in the United States through the interplay of grass roots efforts and greater media exposure (Covey, 1989; Csikszentmihalyi, 1993; Etzioni, 1993; Peck, 1987).

Over time, the call for greater use of collaboration among teachers has grown louder. While widely accepted and long implemented among special education circles, in general education, collaboration has recently gained wider appreciation as a critical factor in school reform (e.g., DeBevoise, 1986; DiPardo, 1999; Friend & Cook, 1992; Hargreaves, 1994; Porter, 1987), especially as it relates to mentoring (Little, 1990), peer coaching (Showers, 1985), teacher empowerment (Maeroff, 1988), and meeting a variety of classroom teaching challenges (DiPardo, 1999). Investigations focusing on school improvement argue for greater collegiality (Purkey & Smith, 1983), describe from an ecological viewpoint how accessible opportunities for collaboration make the new teacher induction process less daunting (Lieberman, 1992; Lieberman & Miller, 1984, 1991; Lightfoot, 1983), see better support for student learning (Rosenholtz, 1989), and find that collaboration helps to support the retention of veteran teachers (Little, 1987). From her extensive work with teachers, DiPardo (1999) believes that: "Collaborative

work may provide opportunities to examine critically the process by which decisions are made and knowledge is constructed" (p. 2). Clandinin and Connelly (1995) see collaboration as an opportunity for teachers to listen to and learn from each other's stories. Collaboration is also described as a key element that should be integrated throughout the human services in every community, especially in early education (e.g., Kagan, 1991). This call for greater collaboration has steadily grown throughout the seventies and eighties as noted in the literature (Gray, 1989; Schorr, 1988), to the point where Kagan (1991) believes that collaborations of all kinds have brought America to "the brink of a practical renaissance . . . where collaborations are being regarded as essential catalysts for system reform" (p. xi).

Hargreaves (1994), who conceptualizes collaboration mostly in the context of teacher-administrator relationships, outlines some of the benefits of collaboration: strengthening moral support, self-efficacy, and self-confidence, increased efficiencies, improved effectiveness (via more risk-taking), reduced overload, synchronized time perspectives, situated certainty (of local wisdom), the exercise of political assertiveness, greater capacity for reflection and critical reformulation of practice, greater organizational responsiveness, increased opportunities to learn, and continuous improvement.

Support for collaboration is also qualified by skepticism. Other theorists advance notions that collaboration is popular because it reduces the threat or uneasiness of competitive interactions, ensures greater voice in decisions and their actualization, and promotes group viability (Warren, 1973). Warren claims that collaboration "gives the

aura of change without affecting either the causes or the basic injustices in the social system" (1973, p. 361). Agreeing, Weiss (1981) points to the "indifferent success, the costs, and the conflict surrounding real-world collaborations," (p. 40), suggesting that collaborations serve a symbolic rather than substantive function, evoking shared social values, rather than successful school reform. In response to such skepticism, Hargreaves (1994) offers what many in the reform movement consider to be a compelling rebuttal: "One of the emergent and most promising metaparadigms of the postmodern age is that of *collaboration* as an articulating and integrating principle of action, planning, culture, development, organization, and research" (p. 245). Hargreaves (1994) also offers an array of issues with which collaborative efforts must contend: comfort and complacency (avoiding risk-taking), tendencies for conformism or groupthink, contrived or contained approaches, and when viewed as co-optative or suspect. Implementing collaboration may become an issue of power and control versus professional empowerment of teachers. While many claims support teacher collaboration amid skepticism, little is known about the various forms it takes in the classroom among general education teachers (DiPardo, 1998; Hargreaves, 1994; Kagan, 1991).

Meaning and Usage

Collaboration, as Dewey once said of society, is "one word, but many things" (1916/1944, p. 81). Employed in diverse educational settings, teacher collaboration has acquired diverse meanings. Each setting has its own unique goals and processes for accomplishing mutual aims, as well as personnel who are increasingly diverse and mobile. Consensus about the meaning of teacher collaboration is subsequently

problematized in the literature due to both the proliferation of diverse educational settings and their respective philosophical diversity.

Much of the confusion arises in the literature when collaboration is used synonymously with cooperation or coordination. For example, the American Psychological Association (1988) and the U.S. Department of Education (1986) classify collaboration as a synonym for cooperation. Elsewhere, however, these terms are arranged in a relational hierarchy with cooperation at the base, to coordination and collaboration, based on criteria of relative complexity, sophistication, and ability to resolve problems (Hord, 1986). Cooperation, grounded in personal relationships, is the most prevalent, least formal concept, without any clearly defined structure or deep awareness of one another's goals (Kagan, 1991). Coordination and collaboration, over time, have become synonymous in daily discourse, and some theorists agree with this premise because these two constructs share important characteristics: mutuality of goals, resource sharing among group members, and dynamic, changing interactions (Stafford, Rog, Vander Meer, 1984).

More recent theorizing posits differences between coordination and collaboration, where coordination is conceptualized as less complex and sophisticated, or as a prerequisite to collaboration (Hord, 1986). On the other hand, collaboration connotes a greater sharing of power, authority, and resources, as well as more intense joint planning (Kraus, 1980). Instead of collaboration, Little (1990) proposes the term "joint work" for school classroom contexts, defined as "interdependent professional activity involving conscious structuring of time and task, as well as teacher leadership and initiative" (p.

519). Friend and Cook (1992) offer a way to resolve the problem of diverse usage by conceptualizing collaboration as a style, applicable in a general way across contexts. Collaboration, they argue, should be considered as "a style for direct interaction between at least two co-equal parties voluntarily engaged in shared decision-making as they work toward a common goal" (p. 6). Such differences in meaning and usage among constructs may lead to differences in the practices and outcomes that participant's experience, particularly as they relate to power (Kraus, 1980), efficacy (Purkey & Smith, 1983), commitment (Maddi & Kobasa, 1984), and feeling a sense of belonging (Hersey & Blanchard, 1972).

A lack of consensus about the meaning of collaboration (literally "working together") is due to a multitude of similar terms, confusion due to interchanging it with the strategies or types of organizations used to achieve it (collective, collaborative, or consortive), and equation with "linkages" that actually refer to the methods established among people or agencies in order to make the collaboration work (Kagan, 1991). Teacher collaboration itself, as one context for collaboration, is often supplanted, conjoined, or confused in some way with a host of related processual terms: cooperation, coordination, consultation, partnering, teaming, mentoring, peer coaching, co-teaching, teaching in common, shared decision-making, joint work, and others. Little (1990) calls teacher collaboration "conceptually amorphous and ideologically sanguine" (p. 509). Gaining conceptual clarity is one reason why it will be important in this study to link my findings to studies of collaboration that are suitable for close and meaningful comparisons.

While there are many understandings of what collaboration means and how it is used, I now examine the conditions and characteristics of teacher collaboration found in the empirical literature.

Conditions and Characteristics for Success or Failure

Teacher collaboration can be problematic for participants (Hargreaves, 1994; Kent, 1987). Despite many positive attributes, collaboration demands additional time and scheduling difficulties, new skills that require additional training and funding that may not be available, and surmounting cynical beliefs about being the latest fad in education (Malone, Gallagher & Long, 2001; Weiss, Cambone, & Wyeth, 1992). Others find that classrooms operating with collaborative practices do not necessarily lead to positive changes in teaching and learning (Hargreaves, 1994; Murphy & Beck, 1995; Weiss, Cambone, & Wyeth, 1992). Leonard & Leonard, (1999) argue that both teachers and administrators continue to struggle with issues of power, the implementation of new roles, and accountability in relation to collaborative practices. Hargreaves (1994) believes that in postmodernity "there will still be ongoing struggles of power, for status and around conflicting interests . . . that will need to be clearly and ethically dealt with on an ongoing basis" (p. 239).

Hargreaves (1994) raises the problem of "balkanization" in schools that arises during attempts to promulgate teacher and school cultures centered upon collaboration within a unified school community. Balkanization refers to the highly compartmentalized patterns in schools "that separate teachers into insulated and often competing sub-groups" (p. 213). His solution, born out in practice at the elementary level, is to strive for greater

wholeness. According to one study (Nias, Southworth, & Campbell, 1992), to be a member of a "whole school" means: (1) becoming a member in a community, (2) sharing the same educational philosophy, (3) working together as a team, (4) acknowledging and activating the complementary expertise of colleagues, (5) relating well to other members, (6) increasing awareness of and involvement in classes beyond one's own, and (7) valuing the principal's leadership.

Nias, Southworth, and Campbell (1989) conclude that research about teacher culture within the whole-school paradigm suggests that it is more likely to flourish under specific contingencies where the school is small, mostly middle class, not very multicultural, and where the leadership is centered in a strong, visionary principal who approaches staff in a benevolently matriarchal or patriarchal yet inclusive way in order to nurture a family of collaborating teachers.

Along with balkanization, such contingencies translate into considerable challenges or barriers, if not impossibilities, for a school that seeks to promulgate wholeness and a culture of teacher collaboration. These previous two studies, however, took place outside of an American educational context (Hargreaves (1994) in Canada, and Nias, Southworth, & Campbell (1989) in England. They focus on many of the major constructs I propose—culture, teacher collaboration in schools—and how these are interwoven in a given context. While similar, I assume that important differences still exist among Canadian, English, and American educational contexts. Thus, I employ these studies and their conclusions with some caution, while still using them as a foil for pondering and planning this study.

Teacher collaboration faces typical barriers, including a demanding schedule, teaching often complex curricula, managing repetitive misbehaviors, an unwillingness of teachers to expose a lack of expertise about their craft, and a long held, firmly embedded notion of teaching as solitary performance, all of which mitigate against the use of collaboration in the classroom (Feiman-Nemser & Floden, 1986; Smyth, 1991). Kent (1987) invested five years initiating teacher collaboration efforts at various schools spread among several school districts. She concluded that most schools are "not organized to provide conditions which stimulate the growth and development of teachers," mostly due to lack of scheduling and time constraints. Teachers who made headway in their collaborative efforts typically did so on their own time and under threat of censure from other teachers. DiPardo (1999) emphasizes that the setting and time in which collaborations are situated should be carefully considered due to their dynamic nature. She offered implications for practice derived from her five year study of teacher collaboration: have good reasons for promulgating collaboration in each setting and make them explicit, provide opportunities for authentic teacher input, promote a climate of safety and trust, provide adequate time, and be ready to adjust expectations to fit the situation as it evolves.

Erickson and Christman (1996) point out the "shadow side" of collaboration (p. 150), where issues of power reside. Foucault (1979) posits that knowledge is situated in and shaped by the power position and interests of each person. In the case of teacher collaboration, this would involve defining and sharing power as attenuated by professional status, personal identity, and the surrounding context. Collaboration may

then be problematized to the same extent that such power is unequal. “Collaboration,” Erickson and Christman conclude, “can easily result in co-optation, or even in domination masked by a euphonious label” (p. 150).

Hargreaves, (1994) observes how a great disparity exists between the espousal of collaboration as a valued process and collaboration as the dominant mode of interaction in schools. Even as collaboration continues to be touted as a major component of restructured schools, most schools offer little incentive, structuring little time, training, rewards, or resources for teachers to work together (Quellmalz, Shields, Knapp, & Bamburg, 1995). The image and model of one teacher in one classroom, whether now or in log cabin days, still pervade the American teaching consciousness and are actualized in traditional practice.

General education, however, may be on the crest of a movement away from individualism and toward greater focus on collaborative practices. Early on, Lewin (1947) and his associates, when looking at group decision-making, concluded that those who interact with others are more likely to carry out decisions compared to those who make decisions alone. Recent research indicates that isolated teachers become restrictive in their thinking and practice, portrayed as professional loneliness (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1996; Lightfoot, 1986), where they start to feel powerless (Ashton & Webb, 1986), and become limited in their pedagogical approaches (Johnson, 1990; Lortie, 1975). In response to the tradition of individualism, Bauwens and Hourcade (1995) argue that:

> The model of one educator in one classroom for the entirety of the day is increasingly inappropriate for the schools of the 21st century. In schools throughout the world professional collaboration is emerging as a new paradigm for education (p. xiii).

The characteristics and conditions that appear to foster successful teacher collaboration often derive from research in special education contexts. Friend and Cook (1992), who represent a credible line of research on teacher collaboration in the special education tradition, outline seven characteristics that may be used reflectively in relation to the study setting and participants. These characteristics of collaboration are: (a) collaboration should be a voluntary choice, (b) a sharing of common goals, (c) parity among participants, (d) a shared responsibility for decisions, (e) a shared accountability for outcomes, (f) sharing resources, and (g) emergent characteristics (e.g., trust becomes stronger). They also offer five principles to clarify how collaboration functions: (a) collaboration as a style may arise anywhere, but is not a prerequisite to most school programs, (b) it may occur informally as well as through organizational efforts, (c) it requires time to develop, (d) it is not a panacea, and (e) it may raise ethical issues for professionals working with students with disabilities. Teamwork research focusing on teachers and special education teachers generally describes the following factors as determinants of a team's success or failure in the classroom: quality of leadership (both in the classroom and at administrative levels, how clearly roles are defined, the number of tasks and their degree of difficulty; the specific mix of team members, and the relative ease and quantity of communication (Thomas, 1992). Within these factors, the most important one appears to be how teachers and schools create clear understandings and agreements about roles (Thomas, 1992). Englert and Tarrant (1995), working with a diverse teacher population, point out three important lessons regarding collaborative communities: (a) diversity among teachers translates into an accumulated wisdom and

richness of knowledge that complements practice, (b) teachers learn best in areas where they perceive the greatest need and interest, and (c) under favorable conditions, teachers felt motivated to make changes in practice that reflected a shared understanding of both goals and theoretical framework.

The support and authentic practice of collaboration may lead to the building of a collaborative ethic. Gerber (1991) outlines ways to support collaboration that derive from a principal's perspective. Three administrative behaviors are deemed essential: advocacy or promotion, visible participation, and support for maintenance of collaborative efforts. These behaviors may then underlie the building of a collaborative ethic, which involves building credibility and durability (Phillips & McCullough, 1990). Their collaborative ethic for school professionals involves the following characteristics:

1. Joint responsibility for problems;
2. Joint accountability;
3. Belief that pooling talents and resources is mutually advantageous, with the benefits of increased range of solutions generated, diversity of expertise and resources available to engage problems, and superiority and originality of solutions generated;
4. Belief that teacher or student problem resolution merits expenditure of time, energy, and resources;
5. Belief that correlates of collaboration are important and desirable (i.e., group morale, group cohesion, increased knowledge of problem-solving processes, and specific alternative classroom interventions). (p. 295)

A collaborative ethic at the school level may be interwoven with how collaboration is actualized in the classroom. Gerber (1991), however, sees a major challenge to collaboration at the classroom level "because the organization of schools is not inherently receptive to collaborative arrangements" (p. 51). Joyce and Murphy (1990) identify some of the issues in developing a receptive school culture:

> The challenge is to create an ethos that is almost an inversion of the one Lortie so accurately described in *School-teacher* (1975). That is, vertical and horizontal isolation and separation of roles will be replaced by integration and collaboration. Anti-intellectualism and protectionism will be replaced by thoughtful inquiry, inclusiveness and an overlapping of roles. (p. 244)

In Part A we see how researchers and their studies have considered the phenomenon of teacher collaboration. While such literature also played an initial role in how I viewed the teachers' collaboration, the sensitizing framework that follows, because it more closely approximated my data and findings, helped me to compare and contrast this study in more meaningful ways.

Part B: A Sensitizing Framework

Two months into my inquiry, as I analyzed my fieldwork data in an iterative and recursive manner, I gradually shifted my frame of analysis. Such a shift meant that I started to look at their teacher collaboration more through the theoretical work and findings of Hargreaves (1994), Erickson (1989), DiPardo (1999), and John-Steiner (2000).

Such frames for analysis helped me to create a view and understanding of teacher collaboration, often through their metaphorical means of explicating their theoretical claims. Metaphors are one way that teachers and researchers communicate and create, either consciously or unconsciously, understandings about practice. Smyth (1991) argues that "the metaphors we choose to frame our thinking, actually drive our descriptive language about schooling, which in turn has a bearing on the way we work with school people" (p. 23). Metaphors can be vital catalysts that permit us to open up tacit assumptions and values, and to look differently at familiar contexts (Lakoff & Johnson,

1980). Hence, if a predominant metaphor is already in place for teachers, it may play a large role in how they construct their practice, from being expansive to restrictive. As an example, Sawada and Calley (1985) use the still popular metaphor of schooling as a Newtonian Machine in which teachers are agentless managers for each stage of product development. Teachers in this view are merely cogs caught up in a production process where isolation virtually precludes collaboration. Or if the pipeline or conduit metaphor is used for teaching (Sergiovanni, 1984), then teacher knowledge and practice may be constrained by accessibility issues. Hargreaves conceptualized two ways that were helpful to me in analyzing a rapidly accumulating corpus of data.

Hargreaves: A Moving Mosaic and Tensions

Metaphors help to challenge prevailing thought and broaden perspectives of what is comprehensible. For example, Hargreaves (1994) favors the "Moving Mosaic" as a metaphor for reflecting the issues and challenges of teacher collaboration in a post-modern world, where there are blurred boundaries, overlapping categories and membership, while being flexible, dynamic, responsive, yet also uncertain, vulnerable, and contested.

Not restricted to classroom teachers, Hargreaves characterizes this form as "a complex web of collegial relationships" (p. 239) that extend beyond the classroom and traditional departmental allegiances, where:

> Warm human relationships of mutual respect and understanding combined with the toleration and even encouragement of debate, discussion and disagreement create flexibility, risk-taking and continuous improvement among the staff which in turn lead to positive results among the students, and positive attitudes among the staff to changes and innovations which might benefit those students (p. 239).

He stresses that conflict, instead of being typically repressed, should be openly embraced and actualized as a continuous process among all school personnel.

In response to a postmodern context, Hargreaves (1994), in a comparatively involved and integrated conceptualization of teacher collaboration, argues that issues of value, purpose, and power should be addressed if collaborative efforts are to thrive. He does so in the form of key "tensions," one of which is between organizational vision and teacher voice. He stresses that "one of the greatest challenges to the emergence of teacher *voice* is the orchestration of educational *vision*" (p. 249), which takes place along a continuum of teacher empowerment. "Collaboration," he urges, "should mean creating the vision together" (p. 250), which should then be based upon and reflect democratic ideals of equal voice in decision-making processes. Another tension, trust in people versus trust in processes, must be negotiated in favor of "the qualities and conduct of individuals" as opposed to "the expertise and performance of abstract systems" (p. 252). Next, he resolves the tension between structure and culture in favor of re-culturing beliefs, practices, and relationships.

DiPardo: A Flowing Stream

Another metaphor of teacher collaboration, that of a flowing stream (DiPardo, 1999), also helped me to shift my frame of analysis for viewing and analyzing teacher collaboration. DiPardo suggests that teacher collaboration operates much the same way as the interaction of two essential elements, land and water:

> Different streams hold certain things in common, but they are also shape-shifting and diverse, varied in terms of depth, width, speed, clarity, purity, and direction. Their course is shaped by the preexisting landscape, but streams can also chisel away at their surroundings, sweeping in new elements, overflowing their banks,

> transforming the context in large and small ways—usually slowly, starting as trickles, gaining force and direction over time. They are also remarkably fragile, vulnerable to a host of dangers, forces that can change the chemistry and direction in sometimes catastrophic ways. (p. 156-57)

She goes on to describe how such a stream is "a human one, composed of people and efforts that change as a result of their mutual contact, contact that is itself in a continual process of transformation," which must also take into account "the countervailing forces that comprise the politics of public education" (p. 157).

Employing the approach of narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), DiPardo relied on teachers' perceptions and her observations at four different schools in the Midwest. In middle and high schools, she looked at 3 different dyads, and a team of eight teachers with an interdisciplinary teaching mandate. The challenge of creating community was one of her central foci. She raised a number of contextual issues, along with teacher factors, and their interplay with teacher collaboration, but included little about the content or process of teacher collaboration. In relation to DiPardo's study, I focused on how the teacher factors and relational aspects of her findings compared and contrasted with my findings.

Erickson: "Mutual Help"

Erickson (1989) found that: "Collaboration means working together in ways that exchange mutual help. The help exchanged must be genuine, not just action that looks like help—going through the motions of being mutually helpful" (p. 431). He describes this conceptualization as one that can impact both the quantity (being able to accomplish more together than when isolated) and quality of work (more satisfying experiences as a teacher, as well as a better product). Teaching, he argues, must include collaborative

processes such as “mutual accommodation and shared thinking” (p. 431). He admonishes, however, that collaboration probably does not work in every context, and that further investigations are needed to ascertain those contexts where collaboration either works best or is ineffectual.

Most of Erickson’s (1989) general conclusions about collaboration derive from his experience in collaborative teacher-researcher contexts (some from experience with teacher- administrator and teacher-student contexts). He advocates for greater parity on all levels between teacher and researcher, which is then more likely to lead to a collaborative dialogue that is more genuine than typical ethnographic interviews. Major elements involved in collaboration include risk and trust, often requiring a leap of faith with co-workers; making one’s own work and thoughts more visible through written and oral dialogue, and the ability to see other perspectives and thought processes, which leads to seeing “one another as reasonable—as making sense” (p.439). As an extension of the continuous process for conflict management that Hargreaves (1994) suggests above, Erickson (1989) observed that when diverse outlooks developed, conflict was generally handled without adverse repercussions because more explicit understandings via frequent dialogue allowed participants to work through tensions.

As a result of his study, Erickson (1989) opens an interesting direction for further study when he posits: “If experienced teachers already possess much of the knowledge they need to improve their practice, then their knowledge can be activated—released—in collaborative efforts at professionalization” (p. 440). Erickson is impressed with the teachers’ knowledge—stemming from their long experience and honed skills—about

how to conduct collaborative relationships, yet he does not delve into the areas or sources of their knowledge, experience, or skills. For this study, especially with relatively new teachers working in a unique and to them, new context, looking at teacher knowledge, experience, and skills in relation to collaboration became a fruitful direction for my inquiry.

John-Steiner: Patterns of Collaboration

John-Steiner's (200) central theme, framed within Vygotskian sociocultural theory, involves people working together productively toward shared goals and how such work contributes to individual and social well-being. She provides a map of the territory of collaborative activity, including its conceptual dimensions, as well as its main distinctive features. She looks at collaborations that are scientific, artistic, feminist, mentoring, across generations, and among "thought communities," where collaborators share both their work and their lives. Her work conceptualizes four interrelated collaborative patterns: Distributed, Complementary, Family, and Integrative. Based on interviews and published biographical accounts, she looks at issues of mutual support, roles and responsibilities, shared values and objectives, and overt and covert rivalries. She sees some relationships evolving initially in terms of being cooperative: making specific contributions to a shared task (not being stymied, like the Durants, by their unequal status in the beginning), then gradually overcoming barriers and becoming fully collaborative. John-Steiner's work was of value to my study in its view of how collaborations evolve over time, as well as its focus on patterns that appeared to make the

greatest sense for the way in which the teachers founded and practiced this teacher collaboration.

None of these four studies, nor the ones in Part A, looked at the dynamics of a collaborative triad. Even so, certain constructs proved useful such as John-Steiner's view of intimacy, synergy, and the delicate balance between interdependence (following Vygotsky and Bakhtin) and individuality, as well as reciprocity, carefully building trust, lowering the boundaries of the self, shaping a shared language, honest dialogue, and mutual appropriation, or learning from each other. I will employ the abovementioned theoretical work to compare and contrast my claims about how the teachers founded and practiced their collaboration.

Remembering that previous research and theory may act as a foil for reflecting upon this and future research, and after situating this study in the literature in Part A and providing a sensitizing framework for analysis in Part B, I summarize for readers the theoretical framework I used in relation to teacher collaboration that made the most sense for generating and analyzing data in relation to my unique setting and participants.

Summary of the Literature

The phenomenon of teacher collaboration is not a tidy one, requiring clarification in its meaning and practice. Overall, the literature regarding teacher collaboration seems to be at a beginning, experimental stage due in part to its relative newness as a research phenomenon, as well as its confusion and intermingling with related constructs. Teacher collaboration also appears to be caught at a crossroads between modernity and postmodernity, traditional and reform postures, and teaching that occurs more

autonomously than collaboratively. Teacher collaboration appears to "look good in theory" and is practiced in many settings, yet questions remain as to its viability for practice in long-term relationships. Despite this, teachers appear quite willing to try collaboration in the classroom, several with apparent success.

By gradually ruling out theories that were not as suitable for framing my data analysis, reviewing the literature for this case helped me to achieve a narrower frame for analysis. I ended up with four studies, Hargreaves (1994), DiPardo (1999), Erickson (1989), and John-Steiner (2000), which, in toto, served as a foil for meaningful comparisons with my findings. I will revisit these four studies in the last chapter, deploying them as a frame of reference in which readers may better understand the findings and conclusions from this study.

Thus, in light of the foregoing research, this study may serve to help clarify or extend the phenomenon of teacher collaboration by describing in depth how the participants founded and practiced it in the given setting, and then interpreting it in relation to my sensitizing framework.

Next I describe in some detail the salient features of my proposed setting, key participants, research approach, methods, procedures, my role in this setting, as well as my paradigmatic framework, all of which influenced how I designed, conducted, and eventually portrayed this study.

CHAPTER THREE

PARADIGM, METHODS, AND PROCEDURES

The main goal of this chapter is to make my process of inquiry more explicit to readers. My hope is that providing a sufficient level of detail, including the rationales for my decisions and their connection with the research process at hand, will afford the reader a better opportunity to follow and understand the course of inquiry, from inception to conclusions. Hence, an important purpose was to design this study in a way that would provide for methodological adequacy, mostly via criteria that would help the reader to evaluate the quality of my research process. Thus, I chose methods and techniques from naturalistic inquiry (Erlandson, et al., 1993; Lincoln & Guba, 1985) in order to (1) implement tenets of trustworthiness, (2) enable authenticity of my findings, and (3) foster ethical treatment of all participants. I also attempted, in regard to the many details of my inquiry process, to strike a balance between providing enough explanation of my methods and procedures for an unassuming reader, with descriptions of how I applied such methods and procedures.

With such a balance in mind, I describe in this chapter how I decided upon and enacted my methodological plans: first, the founding of my paradigmatic framework, second, my naturalistic qualitative approach and its tenets for investigating teacher collaboration, third, a brief introduction to my setting and participants, fourth, my methods and procedures for data generation and analysis, and lastly, why I wrote up the findings the way I did. This sequence and the descriptive/explanatory mode of this chapter are meant to give readers a fuller picture of how I conducted my inquiry with the

goal of achieving research design congruency: aligning and integrating my research approach with my ontology and epistemology, as well as data generation, analysis, findings, conclusions, and the mode of writing with my research approach. Such a congruent approach began with my following choice of paradigms.

A Constructivist Foundation to Qualitative Inquiry

The paradigm that informed my methodological plan for this study was constructivism (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This choice of a nonpositivist paradigm, as well as my research approach and methods, stemmed from my ontological and epistemological presumptions as a researcher. For example, I ascribed to the Lincoln and Guba (1985) argument that we live in a world of multiple realities, where these realities exist in a state of flux, and that such realities are socially constructed. Hence, my research approach and its attendant methods were founded and deployed within a constructivist perspective. For my study this meant striving for mutual engagement with the participants in order to co-construct a subjective reality about their teacher collaboration. These choices, along with the research context, problem, purposes, and research questions, helped me to determine and enact the remainder of my inquiry choices throughout the study, whether of methods and techniques, analytic framework, evaluative criteria, or in writing the manuscript.

The next two sections, involving my choice of research setting and participants, begin a process for readers of contextualizing this study, a process that the researcher must persistently attend to in naturalistic inquiry.

Setting

Located in an urban area in central Texas, the Pathways Community School (PCS) was founded in 1998 as a public charter school. Intending from the start to build a school from the foundation up, and in response to the continued growth of the student population, PCS bought land five miles from the original site in order to build a second, larger facility, completed in August of 2001. My investigation began in December of 2002 at this new campus and concluded just over a year later.

The new campus sports a modern-looking facade reminiscent of the larger beige stucco structures one might find in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Favoring an atypical, curvilinear look, with rounded columns, a covered portico entrance, and well-kept grass out front, this 22,500 square-foot facility housed 22 classrooms, science and technology labs, a photo lab, art and music rooms, a full size kitchen, nurse's station, teacher workroom, four administrative offices, a gymnasium/auditorium/cafeteria, a combination library/meeting room, and an open front foyer where visitors were greeted at a reception desk.

Situated in a relatively unsettled part of the city adjacent to several businesses, the new campus operated at its capacity of 360 students, offering matriculation for kindergarten through high school students whose parents lived or worked within a 30-mile radius. A large group of prospective students awaited matriculation in a lottery pool. The PCS Charter changed the mandated student-teacher ratio to 16:1 for the 2003-2004 school year, an increase of one student per class from the previous school year. Each class was multi-age, spanning two grades, so students "loop" through a two-year learning

cycle with the same teacher. PCS was on a year-round calendar starting in late July, and ending the first week in June, which permitted a six-week break in the summer. Each of four school sessions lasted nine weeks, with three weeks off in the fall, for the Holidays, and for Spring Break. School started at 8 am and let out at 3:20 pm Monday through Thursday, while Friday was a half day, releasing students at 12:15 pm.

PCS, like many charter schools in Texas and across the country (Manhattan Institute, 2003), has performed well. If the statewide test in Texas was a measure of a successful school, then PCS appeared to provide a basis for its students to excel academically. Upon completion of the 2002 TAAS (Texas Assessment of Academic Skills), PCS was rated as an Exemplary school (the highest of four rating categories) by the Texas State Board of Education.

The Charter outlines an eleven-member Governing Council (GC) whose main purpose was to act as the policy-setting body for the school. It included the principal (as Chair), four members who were current PCS teachers, four current PCS parents, and two Community/Business members who didn't have children at the school. Quarterly GC meetings were, by state law, open to the public.

At the start of its sixth year in the summer of 2003, PCS reached its goal of becoming a K-12 school by adding a senior class. Along with other changes and new matriculations, approximately 40% of student body was new. The students at the new campus (K-12) were 17% African American, 26% Latin American, 3% Asian, Pacific Islander, or Indian, and 54% Caucasian. The students in the K-1 classroom were predominantly Caucasian (83%), while 6% were African American, 9% Latin American,

and 2% Indian. The student dress code stipulated that red or navy blue collared-shirts with no images or printing, worn along with navy blue or khaki shorts or pants.

The full-time personnel at PCS consisted of 4 administrators, 27 teachers, and 4 support staff. The administrative team was composed of the Principal, Vice-Principal, Business Administrator, and Instructional Coordinator. The Governing Council elevated the Vice-Principal, Mr. Towson, to Principal after Ms. Poulson retired from her principalship at the end of the 2002-2003 school year—the approximate mid-point of data generation. The new principal was African-American and the seven elementary teachers (K-5) were Caucasian—six females and one male.

Parents at PCS participated in the Parent Volunteer Council, or PVC. Parents were asked, expected, and often played an active role in both their child's education and in making decisions that impact the school. They were obligated to volunteer a minimum of 20 hours per school year. Other parent committees, like the fundraising or playground committee, were more informal than the PVC and met a variety of annual or pressing needs. An annual evaluation took place in the spring when parents were encouraged to voice their concerns about many aspects of school structure and function.

This setting offered a fertile context for investigating teacher collaboration. The three K-1 teachers were under no mandate or obligation from the school in terms of how they were to function together in this classroom. The school, while mandating curricula that reflected the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS), preserved many choices for teachers in how they conducted their classes. Hence, the question of how they would operate in a shared classroom was a relatively open one. Because they decided

prior to this study that their work together was "collaborative," and because I prioritized teachers' voice and included participant collaboration as important features of my design, I chose to develop my inquiry with teacher collaboration as the focus of inquiry.

Participants

The key participants were three K-1 teachers who shared the same classroom. The K-1 teachers shared a common ethnicity (Caucasian), and they were all married females (ages 26, 38, and 43). The youngest, Katerina Yost, was a first-year teacher from Germany (also fluent in English). The next oldest, Margret Miller, had taught for five years (though just returned from a six-year hiatus from teaching) and was also in her first year at this school. The oldest, Heather James, had taught at the elementary level for sixteen years, and was in her second year at PCS. Ms. Yost and Ms. Miller hadn't taught either kindergarten or first grade before, while Ms. James began teaching K-1 at PCS in August of 2001.

During the six months prior to the start of this study, these three teachers, in the face of many difficult challenges, appeared to me, other teachers, parents, and the administration to be quite successful at teacher collaboration. After several discussions about the salient features of life in this classroom, these three teachers and two administrators (Principal and Business Administrator) agreed that the most important feature in the successful conduct of this classroom was that of teacher collaboration. In addition, these teachers were purposively included because of their close connection with teacher collaboration, and their ability, demonstrated by their enthusiasm and eloquence during informal dialogue, to contribute to answering the research questions of this study.

They were also included due to my past professional relationship with them that started in May of 2002, developed as part of my previous training and teaching assignment at the school.

I also interviewed two key administrators (Principal Paul Towson, the former Vice Principal who became Principal half way through the study at the end of the 2002-2003 school year, and the Business Administrator and a PCS founder, Anita Drucker) for their perspectives and roles in relation to this teacher collaboration, as well as the former Principal, Ms. Gwen Poulson. Ms. Poulson, and Ms. Drucker were Caucasian females, age 57 and 43, respectively, while Mr. Towson was an African-American, age 34. Upon approval of the University Institutional Review Board, participant involvement in the study began the first week in December of 2002 and concluded just over one year later. I turn now to the approach, methods, techniques, and procedures that I employed for this study.

Qualitative Research Approach: Naturalistic Inquiry

Before deciding on my approach to inquiry, and recognizing that some approaches and methods were more appropriate and productive than others for pursuing my research questions, I evaluated several different qualitative approaches in relation to how I could inquire effectively into teacher collaboration in the given context. I chose the tenets of naturalistic inquiry (Erlandson, et al., 1993) in order to render an understanding of teacher collaboration that honored the teachers' point of view and empowered them in a co-constructive role in the research process. And because both teacher collaboration and its context of a shared classroom were relatively unexplored, naturalistic inquiry,

with its discovery orientation, was well-suited for investigating the nascent area of teacher collaboration. Ayers (1989) deployed a similar research approach in his study of six preschool teachers.

Next, I made two major design choices. First, I chose to look through a sociological lens at the teachers' collaborative efforts because my primary interest was to investigate the essence of teacher collaboration as a social construct. Hence, my primary focus was on social processes rather than, say, psychological ones. This choice was partly a function of my experience and academic training (I will explain this choice further, and also relate other methodological choices in this chapter's last section, "Researcher Role & Relationships"). Second, I chose to employ case study tenets because they forced me to consider teacher collaboration as a "bounded system" (Smith, 1979). The system I determined was bounded by what the teachers said and did during their collaborative endeavors, and by what they said retrospectively about their collaboration. Hence, these two choices helped to define further how I approached my inquiry in order to facilitate a meaningful generation of data, as well as a suitable focus for analyses and writing.

I grounded the tenets of my inquiry into teacher collaboration in the philosophical foundation proposed by Merleau-Ponty (1962), which prioritizes the primacy of sensory experience, of direct intercourse with the world and with the meanings and significance that arise from such experience. In congruence with a constructivist epistemology, Merleau-Ponty's philosophy guided me in choices of specific processes for this inquiry, chiefly the tenets I utilized from naturalistic inquiry, as well as my methods and

procedures for data generation, my inductive framework for analysis, and the way in which I wrote up the findings.

Next, I outline the tenets of naturalistic inquiry, which I chose in order to increase the trustworthiness and authenticity of my findings, as well as for its concern for developing and maintaining co-constructive and ethical relationships with participants.

Criteria for Evaluating Study Quality

The tenets of naturalistic inquiry for my study were related in many ways to criteria for evaluating my quality of research. Most helpful to me in this regard were the arguments for quality criteria from Lincoln and Guba (1985), Guba and Lincoln, 1989, and Erlandson, Harris, Skipper and Allen (1993), who posit a different way of thinking about issues of validity and reliability for constructivist research. I employed their alternative constructs for evaluating the quality of research: trustworthiness, authenticity, and ethical treatment of participants. Described below, such criteria for quality are mostly in response to the subjectivity, biases, actions, and interactions of the researcher throughout a course of inquiry. Hence, in the following three sections I focus on making explicit the criteria for evaluating the quality of this study, and how I specifically employed these criteria.

Trustworthiness

Aimed at methodological adequacy, the criterion of trustworthiness helped to establish a foundation for my methods and procedures. Building trustworthiness was a way to provide the basis for applying verisimilitude, or "truth likeness," and support a process that readers could use to evaluate the adequacy of my methods and procedures,

and help the reader to understand the positionality (biased vs. neutral) of my research process and findings (Erlandson, et al., 1993). Hence, I sought to build trustworthiness for the co-constructions of teacher collaboration by developing its component parts: credibility, transferability, and the audit trail.

Credibility

Credibility is the most important component of building trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In order to make credible findings more likely, I implemented six strategies that Erlandson, et al. (1993) outline: triangulation, prolonged engagement, persistent observation, member checks, peer debriefing, and a reflexive journal, all of which I explain below.

Triangulation. I implemented several strategies for triangulation in order to make evidence warrantable, and to augment breadth, complexity, richness, rigor, and depth to this inquiry (Flick, 1998). I supported methodological triangulation with additional ways to triangulate by gathering evidence that stemmed from: (1) observing multiple parts of the context at different times and under varying circumstances, (2) listening to multiple voices (via participant observations, naturalistic audio recordings, interviews, focus groups, and peer debriefing), including the teachers, administrators, and peer debriefers, (3) multiple (at three junctures) and timely member-checks (both proximal and distal) of all data except for digital recordings, and (4) gathering several documents and artifacts. I kept track of each facet of data generation in accord with these four angles into the data, reflexively checking their implementation throughout the study, and, more importantly, using them to focus on equivalent data sets (Erlandson, et al., 1993). I also sought

negative cases, or contrasting and disconfirming data, so that data could have a basis for comparison (Denzin, 1997), and that would make for a richer rendering of the phenomenon. Such data were represented in this study, for example, when the teachers chose to change course and not collaborate on the dissemination of the weekly parent letter. I used this incident to broaden my description, analysis and theoretical treatment of the phenomenon.

Prolonged Engagement. This technique aimed at ameliorating distortions due to my interactivity with the setting and participants, my biases, and unusual or atypical events and behaviors. Because I spent over a year in the setting generating data, and because of my prior six months of involvement with the school and these teachers, I was able to minimize such distortions. Such prolonged engagement afforded me a much higher level of rapport from the beginning of data generation, and enabled me to better understand teacher collaboration from the participants' perspectives.

Persistent Observation. In conjunction with prolonged engagement and constant analysis, persistent observation meant that I was able to identify activities and patterns germane to the research questions, and to consistently pursue co-constructions in different ways. I was a participant-observer during ten hour days in the beginning and at three other junctures, gradually obtaining in-depth, accurate data, including a growing ability to sort relevant from irrelevant data. I did so through being gradually more purposeful in how I reflected recursively upon and framed my data generation and analysis.

Member Checks. Systematically and at numerous points throughout the study, I had participants verify both the corpus of data and any interpretations, including codes, affinities, definitions, and the final report. This was an important and empowering part of the co-construction process, yielding new data as well as verifying extant data.

Peer Debriefing. I worked periodically with two peer debriefers familiar my research. They were of most service in helping me to reflect on my inductive processes, focusing mostly on how I coded and eventually argued for interpretations within the theoretical frameworks of this study.

Reflexive Journal. Before and throughout data generation, I kept a reflexive journal. I did so on almost a daily basis in the beginning, evolving to 2-3 times weekly as I asked fewer questions of the context and about the research process. I also included my research schedules, logistics, insights, and rationale for methodological decisions in this journal (Erlandson, et al., 1993), though I used the journal mostly for surfacing my biases and for forming questions of the data, or about my emerging interpretations.

Transferability

Transferability, in lieu of generalizability, was the extent to which my findings might be applied in other contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Demonstrating transferability belongs not to the researcher, but "to those who would apply it to the receiving context" (Erlandson, 1993, p.33). Transferability across contexts may occur because of shared characteristics between originating and receiving contexts, which make their presence known through strategies of "thick" description and purposive sampling (the later described in the section above, "Participants"). My efforts at thick description were

focused on bringing the reader vicariously into the experience of teacher collaboration. I tried to supply enough description of the history, physical setting, sights, sounds, processes, and the teachers themselves in order to afford the reader as close to a genuine sense of being there as possible. My "thick" descriptive portrayal of teacher collaboration in chapters four and five were meant to "capture essence" where "portraits make the subject feel 'seen' in a way they have never felt seen before, fully attended to, wrapped up in an empathetic gaze" (Lightfoot, 1983, p. 5). Hence, I sought to portray the teachers and their collaborative endeavor as they experienced, felt, and helped co-construct it. Such description formed the foundation upon which further analysis and interpretation were built. Thus, my analysis and interpretation were governed by the analytic tenets of naturalistic inquiry.

Audit Trail

The audit trail, a systematic way to keep records, made possible the dependability and confirmability of my study. Dependability is a quest for variabilities during the research process that can be ascribed to particular sources, like error, better insights, and reality shifts (Guba, 1981), while confirmability is a criterion for evaluating the degree to which my findings are related to the focus of inquiry, and not the researcher (Erlandson, et al., 1993). Hence, the audit trail affords an external check of how the study progressed through specific documentation.

In order to develop an audit trail and show my process of inquiry as it unfolded, I kept data (audio tapes and transcripts, interview notes, fieldnotes, and memos), a description of how I used computer software (Atlas-ti), data reduction and analysis

products (coding procedures, codes and their definitions, notes on member checks, and peer debriefing notes), data reconstruction and synthesis products (data analysis sheets, reports, and a history of visual displays to summarize large quantities of data), and a partitioned research process journal showing my (1) development of theoretical constructs, (2) a history and evaluation of the methods I enacted, and (3) emergent codes and definitions, patterns, insights, themes, and conclusions. Such an audit trail, when developed reflexively on a daily, and even moment-to-moment basis (Coffey, 1999; Davies, 1999), helped to reveal my choices and biases, hopefully making my inquiry process more explicit and transparent to the reader. When reflexivity was problematic in the daily tumult of the field, as it often was, I relied upon journaling at junctures closely proximate to my observations and interviews, either that same evening or the next day.

Authenticity

Responding to the multiple realities that constructivism holds, I afforded the constructions of each participant, as much as possible, an equal status, and fostered the productive use of their constructions. This is what Lincoln and Guba (1985) term "authenticity." Authenticity encompasses how my research process afforded equal status to the constructions of participants, how I sought to incorporate their constructions at various junctures, and what the participants achieved as a result of co-constructing this inquiry. I approached the incorporation of their constructions through strategies of fairness and four types of authenticity: ontological, educative, catalytic, and tactical.

Because fairness demands that all constructions have equal and open access to the on-going research process (Erlandson, et al., 1993), I devised various strategies for

accomplishing such access. For example, during data generation I copied and delivered in small portions along the way, the coded fieldnotes, transcribed interviews, transcribed audio recordings of collaboration in action, and documents and artifacts, along with my reflexive journal, making them available for each teacher to review and add their interpretations. At several points during the study I engaged the participants in constructing their own analysis of the data. I gave them copies of my fieldnotes, transcripts, and digital recordings and initially asked them to unitize and code. They did so, somewhat sparingly, preferring instead to interact with my codes and categories. I also gave them my developing manuscript chapter by chapter, which they returned in sealed envelopes with corrections and suggestions. Each participant also read through the final report, thus having access once again to make constructions. We also convened at three junctures to review the evolving constructions of other participants, thus fostering their dialectic interaction. Having said this, responsibility for the content of the final report, after considering alternative constructions, was solely mine. This responsibility was clear as well to all participants from the beginning of and at three junctures during the study.

The testimony of the participants served as the primary vehicle for how authenticity was confirmed, while my observations of their collaborative efforts toward the conclusion of the study provided a second source for confirming authenticity. Most interesting were the reactions of the teachers to their sections in chapter four that described each of them, respectively. Just prior to submitting the final manuscript, for about twenty minutes, we stood in a circle intently discussing how I portrayed each

teacher. Margret was insistent that I somehow modify the part about her possibly being "bossy," to one that described her instead in a more positive light as "passionate, driven, focused, enthusiastic," and she suggested that her "social/intuitive side balanced the intense side." At a couple of junctures while Margret was professing her proposed modification, Katerina, smiling, chimed in with: "But you are bossy!" After reflection, I decided to leave the "bossy" term in the manuscript and add Margret's proposed modification, because doing so, in both ways, led to a more accurate, richer construction of who she was in this collaboration. I also added to the manuscript in a similar fashion in response to Heather's remark at this time about being overly represented as "laid back."

Examples that confirmed the four different types of authenticity included: (1) ontological authenticity, when the teachers reported that they had developed more explicit understandings of their teacher collaboration, especially in terms of their collaborative identities and how to generate better curriculum ideas; (2) educative authenticity, when the teachers explained how their understanding and appreciation of other constructions had been augmented as a result of reviewing the constructions of other participants; (3) they demonstrated catalytic authenticity when they used their new understanding of collaboration to decrease the amount of time collaborating by increasing the effectiveness of their meetings via written agendas and task lists, and (4) they confirmed tactical authenticity with their testimony that they were empowered, as a result of understanding their collaboration as an effective bargaining tool, to write joint letters to the administration that protected, for instance, the duration of their joint planning time during the school day. Tactical authenticity was also confirmed as the study progressed

through their increased willingness to add their interpretations to the data. Striving to develop such authenticity throughout the study was also a way of treating the participants in an ethical manner, to which I now turn.

Ethical Treatment of Participants

Interwoven with authenticity, naturalistic inquiry emphasizes careful and proactive consideration of how the researcher treats ethically each participant. Such treatment, described in the following paragraphs, was intended to enhance the process of inquiry by ameliorating any sources of harm or deception, particularly by ensuring informed consent, privacy/confidentiality, (Erlandson, et al., 1993) and fairness, which, in this case, meant developing a balance of reciprocity, or give and take between me and the participants. My intention for the examples below is that they demonstrate how my strategies for ethical treatment of participants paved the way for constructing a more rigorous and productive research context and process of inquiry.

Research Protocol

Even before attaining signatures of informed consent, I gave the teachers opportunities to get to know me during mutual training opportunities, as well as in their classroom. During at least a dozen visits to their classroom, I afforded the teachers' opportunities to get to know me. Hence, they were able to make more informed judgments about my character and demeanor, and thus able to make a more informed decision about having me in their classroom for an extended period of time. These opportunities also enabled me to begin research with some rapport already established with the teachers, rather than waiting weeks or months for rapport to develop. I obtained

informed consent at first verbally, then via the official consent document, informing them of the title, focus, methods of data collection, type and degree of involvement, and the potential risks and benefits of the study. I helped answer questions about the consent form, and collected each consent form with the appropriate signature at a time that was convenient to each participant, whereupon each participant retained a copy of the consent form. Then, twice more during the inquiry, I re-obtained their verbal consent, emphasizing each time their freedom and the specific method to opt out of the study at any time without negative consequence. In addition, throughout the course of inquiry I carefully monitored their responses to my data generation and analytic efforts for any adverse shift in consensual attitude. Only on a couple of occasions did I sense any discontent, and these I disconfirmed later as a result of either being physically tired or frustrated in some way with pedagogical or school processes.

In the consent form (see Appendix G, Informed Consent Letter) I asked the participants, as it turned out on occasion, for more time than was actually needed. I asked for permission to conduct participant-observations and write fieldnotes about teacher collaboration in the classroom and at other school venues before, during, and after school, to average not more than four hours a day (actual average: 3 hours per day). I asked each participant for any documents that might pertain to teacher collaboration estimated at fifteen minutes per participant over the course of the study (the actual was the same). I then asked each participant to engage in up to six audiotaped individual (semi-structured) interviews and up to four audiotaped focus group interviews, with each interview up to ninety minutes in length, not to exceed a total of fifteen hours per participant over the

course of the study (actual: eight hours per participant for three individual semi-structured interviews each, and 3 focus group interviews), conducted at a place of mutual convenience and comfort, either at the school or away from the school (all of them were conducted in the classroom). I asked for their permission to use a digital recorder to supplement my fieldnotes. I also asked each participant to help check each interview and fieldnotes transcript, as well as the last draft of the research report (prior to submission) for accuracy and to suggest modifications or extensions of any meanings, estimated at five hours each over the course of the study (actual: six to seven hours per participants). After the initial audiotaped interviews, I asked each participant to engage in informal dialogue of up to five minutes a day not to exceed a total of three hours per participant over the course of the study (actual: the same), at a mutually agreed upon time and place. For each participant the total time for interviews, document collection, member-checks, and dialoging, did not exceed ninety minutes in any one day, as originally stipulated, and a participant's time in these activities did not exceed twenty-four hours over the course of the study, as stipulated (actual: eighteen to nineteen hours for each teacher, and about two hours for each of the other participants).

One of the potential risks for the teachers and me was the potential for emotional tension as I wrote fieldnotes or did digital recordings, while responding to questions during interviews, or by the use of an audiotape recorder. This risk was minimized by an informal, collaborative approach to such data generation, by agreeing upon mutually convenient times and comfortable places, by my previous experience with these techniques, as well as by the rapport that already existed from our previous professional

relationship at this school. Written surveys were also considered, but deemed insufficient in relation to the complexity and ambiguity of the topic under study.

A second potential risk concerned confidentiality for the participants. This risk was minimized on the one hand by using pseudonyms for proper names, whether in transcriptions or any draft of the report, by keeping all data sources during and after the study in a locked file cabinet in my office to which I have the only key. On the other hand, I realized from the beginning that I could not protect the participants from being identified by those in the school community. Prior to signing their informed consent and with reminders at two junctures during the study, I made sure that they understood such a lack of privacy and confidentiality, as well as its implications. Despite knowing that they would likely be asked by members of the school community about their role in the study and for justification of their statements and positions in the final report, the participants maintained their enthusiasm for participating in the study.

The benefits for the participants included the construction of new knowledge—knowledge about teacher collaboration that became more explicit, and thus more accessible and usable. Such knowledge, it was hoped by all parties, could better inform their future collaborations in the K-1 classroom, the other collaborative relationships at the school, as well as other collaborations that exist elsewhere in education, social services, business, or family contexts. Such a benefit was deemed to outweigh any slight emotional discomfort that might have been experienced by any of the participants (I found none). Hence, the benefits to participants and society appeared to outweigh the risks.

Fairness

My attention to fairness also had an ethical dimension to it. I was concerned from the outset with providing reciprocity, or a balanced give and take experience with the participants. These busy teachers had pledged to give me a significant amount of their time and energy to the task of building shared constructions, and they did so even during times of physical fatigue. I wanted to ensure that if an imbalance was to result, that the teachers would receive more than I from this research experience. Hence, as part of my participant-observer role, I volunteered to help them in whatever way they needed. As the study progressed, they felt more and more comfortable asking me to do tasks – usually tasks that resulted from collaborative interaction, yet sometimes mundane tasks unassociated with collaboration. I felt that my ethical imperative had been approached via two critical incidents. First, at the end of the school year, the teachers gave me a small hardcover notepad with gilded edges, a beautiful picture of a palm tree on the front, a matching decorative pencil that attached, and their comments of thanks on the opening pages, one writing: "Thanks for being there for us. It seems like it would have been impossible without you." Secondly, at the end of the study each teacher thanked me in an emotive and effusive way for having contributed to their teaching enterprise, commenting upon how I gave more energy to helping them than vice versa. Regardless of the eventual balance of reciprocity, I thought that I had given amply.

Thus, through building authenticity, my research protocol, and striving for fairness, I endeavored to treat participants in an ethical manner throughout the study. Such were the processes of our evolving partnership, a partnership that thrived upon the

practice of fairness, including equal and open access to separate constructions. Hence, we were able to develop and share co-constructions in ways "beyond the conventional safeguards provided by research ethics" (Erlandson, et al., 1993). Such co-constructions were also the product of the ways in which I generated data and conducted analytic processes, below.

Data Generation

Following the recommendations of Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Erlandson, et al. (1993), I deployed data generation methods (participant-observation and fieldnotes, interviews, audio recordings, documents and artifacts) and techniques (prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, referential adequacy of materials, member checks, peer debriefing, and a reflexive journal) that helped me, along with my analytic framework, to implement a rigorous and trustworthy co-construction of interpretations. Co-construction was also facilitated by creating, as much as possible, a climate of relational parity in the dialoging that occurred throughout the study (Stringer, 1997). Such collaboration was not mandatory, but rather evolved on a daily, moment-to-moment basis in accord with participant interests and desires. I also implemented the Erlandson, et al. (1993) recommendation to look for and analyze negative cases in order to enhance thick description, promote conceptual development of the construct, and reflect "the complexity inherent in the setting's context" (p. 121). My description of methods first and techniques, or procedures, second, is an artificial separation only, because they were mostly integrated and supportive of each other throughout data generation.

Methods

Data generation occurred over the course of a year, from the first week in December, 2002, through December of 2003. The methods I chose, participant-observation and fieldnotes, individual interviews, focus groups, and naturalistic voice recordings, I justified in large measure by the reciprocal and dialectical relationships that they fostered. Such a reciprocal and dialectic functioning of relationships tended to gradually erode the typical subject-object dichotomy (May, 1958, as cited in Clandinin, 1986). I conducted data generation in two phases, though with some overlap between phases. Phase one, December of 2002 through September of 2003, generated the bulk of the data corpus. During the first two-thirds of phase one, I focused mostly on participant observation, fieldnotes, and naturalistic voice recordings, while in the later third (July through September of 2003), I conducted more individual formal interviews and focus groups. Thus, I relied on participant-observation to, in a sense, contextualize my interviews with the intent of making the interviews more productive and meaningful. During phase two, I focused more on confirming the typicality of the data from phase one, as well as further developing and confirming my on-going data analyses with particular attention to key patterns and their relationships.

During these two phases of data generation, I conceptualized the interplay of methods as iterative and as a way to produce methodological triangulation. As iterative, for example, I typically started with participant-observation, then initiated informal conversations that explored the constructs I was observing and recording, followed by a more in-depth formal interview (and later, a focus group), which helped to surface,

extend, organize, and further define patterns and their relationships. This routine was repeated numerous times. Each method, in conjunction with iteration, supported the other in a dance of methodological triangulation. In other words, I proceeded with data analysis via such iteration among methods, responding to data as it was generated with methods that further developed the data, relying mostly upon inductive processes to do so.

Participant-Observation

I implemented the following criteria for conducting and evaluating my participant observation (adapted from Gall, Borg & Gall, 1996), including:

- Becoming involved as a way to reduce erroneously reported data;
- Having relatively free access to a broad range of activities;
- Conducting intense observations over a long period of time;
- Striving to gain an overall view of the topic and its context, and then sampling purposively in order to generate data that represent the range of realities for the participants, being sensitive to both what was excluded as well as what was included;
- Observing, recording, and analyzing, not just verbal exchanges but also more subtle cues.

From December of 2002 through August of 2003 I conducted the primary phase of my observations, with periodic observations September through January to confirm and extend co-constructions. The first month I spent four out of five days in the classroom. After the first month I identified those periods when the teachers collaborated, primarily during their planning period and after school, and conducted observations

during these periods that lasted between two to three hours per day. In July and October I repeated my full day schedule of observations to confirm that collaboration was occurring during the same periods as the first month.

The first month I had two main objectives in mind. I already had a significant degree of rapport with these teachers, built over the previous six months (May through November of 2002). I recognized, however, that being a researcher in their room posed a contextual shift in our relationship, and thus a new challenge for our rapport. Hence, I proceeded with great caution at first, choosing to sit and observe from the common area far removed from their individual teaching areas. I wanted them to get used to my presence and the idea that I was actually observing them in action, and also did so for the sake of my own comfort level. As I soon bridged this distance, walking up to their group gatherings, I often prefaced my entry with questions about their comfort level, like: "Are you all comfortable with my joining you? Do you mind if I take notes? Do you mind if I use this digital recorder?" Their response to me was always positive. In retrospect, when able to compare our rapport at the conclusion of the study, I would characterize the beginning as having some relational tension, yet mostly of a comfortable nature. Regardless of any such tension, in their initial interview each teacher said they were excited about participating in the study.

Participant observation helped me to elicit and co-construct my findings. I needed to develop what Lightfoot (1983) calls "empathic regard," or in phenomenology, "intersubjectivity" (van Manen, 2002), the experiencing of being reflexive about mutual experiences in fieldnotes and with the teachers, in order to increase my identification and

understanding of the teachers' perspectives. Doing so was one of the keys to productive data generation. Like Lightfoot's empathic regard, I followed Ayers' (1989) dictum that "a sense of compassion and involvement is necessary in order to apprehend how people feel and face their teaching lives" (p. 20). Hence, I recorded in a reflexive journal those times when I worked with the teachers on a project, then pondered how my experience related to that of the teachers. For instance, when I helped with a joint presentation, I wrote: "I wonder if my efforts, which I interpret as being helpful and supportive, are interpreted similarly by the teachers, and whether they would interpret their similar efforts in this context as being helpful and supportive" (Fieldnotes, p. 8). In other words, by participating I could follow up with the teachers in ways that responded to and elicited everyone's experience, ways that might not have been afforded to me under a rubric of unobtrusive observation.

Fieldnotes and Audio Recordings

My aim in doing fieldwork as a participant-observer was to blend into and play, as much as possible, a "natural" role in the proceedings of teacher collaboration (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). I wanted to do so without forcing myself to exhibit behavior too far from my norm, which might have made both the teachers and me uncomfortable. With this approach in mind, I tried to dress and appear as the teachers did, emulating their casual clothing and natural look (low maintenance hair, neat, but not immaculate). After a couple of weeks into data generation, as well as toward the end, I asked the teachers what they thought about me and my conduct of research in their midst. Both times their responses were that my interactions presented no problem, and that I was more or less

just like one of them. Each time they described me as "easy-going," hence my demeanor may have been responsible for their lack of self-consciousness about my making notes or audio recordings.

I deviated somewhat with Bogdan and Biklen (2003) and other fieldworkers in my approach to taking fieldnotes. Instead of always waiting to inscribe fieldnotes after leaving the setting, I wrote about half my fieldnotes in the midst of the teachers' collaborative endeavors. Within the first week, after attempting to write fieldnotes afterwards in my office, I realized that I was missing much of the detail germane to their collaboration. They generally talked fast in staccato-like turns at dialog that sometimes lasted up to two hours. Hence, after carefully negotiating their acceptance (not just their approval), I starting taking contemporaneous fieldnotes in their midst. I also had extended periods of time in between collaborative efforts to generate fieldnotes. With more immediate fieldnotes, I was able to record in a fuller way, yet I was still missing the level of detail in their dialogs that I needed in order to demonstrate how involved many of their collaborative endeavors were. Hence, their rapid dialogs are also why I soon instigated audio field recordings into fieldwork.

Instead of a standard size audio tape recorder for capturing collaborative dialogs, I decided to use a palm-size digital recorder, initially for its relative unobtrusiveness and ease of recording and storing dialogs. This small device allowed me to record data into five folders, which I used for separate collaborative endeavors. It also allowed me to download and save dialogs (which I backed up via CD) directly into my computer for later playback and analysis. I also took contemporaneous audio-notes in the field,

reflecting on what I was observing at the moment, providing contextualizing comments, and making observer comments of a theoretical and methodological nature. I continued making audio-notes on the way back to my office as well. Using an audio recorder in the classroom freed me to perform more complex tasks in my fieldnotes, like drawing Venn diagrams or networks of how the context, teachers, and their collaborative endeavors might be related. Each separate recording automatically displayed date, time, duration, and a title on the computer, which also helped me perform analyses. I could easily find and play back certain dialogs numerous times as analysis dictated. Listening to dialogs in this fashion, rather than relying solely on transcripts, seemed to foster a heightened sense for me of the context, who the individual teachers were in this collaboration, and how they went about their collaborations.

Interviews: Individual & Focus Group

I adapted Seidman's (1998) approach, using a set of three semi-structured interviews for each teacher. Interview one focused on the teacher's professional history, including her time at PCS. The second interview focused on the details of the teacher as a collaborator, and in the third interview I asked each teacher to reflect upon their understanding of teacher collaboration. The semi-structured interview questions I used are included in Appendix C. I also initiated numerous informal conversations that aided an on-going co-constructive process. In general, my focus during interviews was to ask the teachers to describe their practice of teacher collaboration in a shared classroom. I asked them individually via the semi-structured interviews and informal conversations, then later as a group via informal conversations and focus group interviews, how they

engaged, both individually and as a group, in the process of teacher collaboration, including what transpired in order to plan, negotiate, arrange, conduct, support, evaluate, learn about, and develop it over time. I also asked them about the role that each individual played, the context in which roles were developed (including their teaching history), the goals that evolved and became more explicit, and the ways in which responsibilities were assigned and carried out for achieving goals. Hence, I tried to lay the foundation for the co-constructions that emerged from these interviews (as well as the other methods), that would help to portray the interplay of knowledge and identity that each participant brought to this teacher collaboration, as well as the context in which such knowledge and identity operated (described in Clandinin & Connelly, 1995).

Focus group interviewing was another important way of generating data in an inductive yet naturalistic way (Krueger, 2000). The focus group approach I used, Interactive Qualitative Analysis, or IQA (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004), was a way of empowering the teachers to construct a "conceptual map . . . of how a person or a group understands a particular phenomenon" (p. 67). The authors outline a 16-step approach for generating and analyzing IQA data (see Appendix E), using a process they describe in general, where:

> The thoughts of the group as a whole are combined and organized into common themes or affinities by the group itself with the aid of a facilitator. The group collectively names the affinities and helps the researcher create a detailed written description or definition of each affinity. The goal is to produce the smallest number of affinities with the greatest amount of detail or "richness." (p. 69)

I conducted a total of three such focus groups, the last one mostly of a member-checking nature. During the first IQA session in particular, I discussed with the teachers

how to use a non-evaluative, creative brainstorming process for developing affinities in a retrospective way. In this way I tried to apply Pinar's (1975) description of free association, where the more one can "fall into past experience" and "relive early and present experiences," the more data are "phenomenologically accurate" (p. 408). After each focus group, the teachers each took copies of the affinity productions home with them in order to reflect upon and further define each affinity, in some cases adding new affinities and/or commenting upon the relationships among affinities. Thus, the IQA was a way of grounding data in phenomenological accuracy, and a way to foster collaborative participation with the teachers in the pursuit of rich data generation and a triangulated, trustworthy analysis.

Documents & Artifacts

I collected documents and artifacts from four different sources. Along with the other teachers' boxes in the resource room, I had a box for collecting all the school documents that the teachers received. Second, I went through the same trainings as the teachers and hence collected all the same training materials. Third, from the school online website, I read through the school charter and other documents. Lastly, I copied some of the artifacts produced by the teachers, such as agendas and to-do-lists (see Appendix H for a sample). I then read through these documents and artifacts for any evidence or references related to their teacher collaboration, which, in addition to collaboration, included a search for similar terms like cooperation, coordination, collegiality, and teamwork. Doing so helped me to describe how the participants considered and practiced collaboration in their context.

In addition, I used a data generation guide in order to be structurally consistent and appropriately focused during data generation, and as a way to further delineate my research questions. This data generation guide acted as a dynamic, emerging outline per each research question, and in relation to each observation session and interview. My research questions, data generation guide, and working definition then evolved in concert, responding to each successive effort at data generation and analysis.

Analysis: Transforming Data

My approach for transforming data followed that of naturalistic inquiry, and employed the less than tidy, yet meaningful divisions of description, analysis, and interpretation (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Wolcott, 1994: see below in "Textual Framework" for a description of this tri-partite division). In general, my analysis began close to the data and gradually moved further away from data that were generated in the course of my fieldwork. I employed such a division, roughly congruent with, respectively, the description, findings, and conclusion sections of many research reports, in order to help readers follow and understand how I considered and connected data and description, description and analysis, and finally analysis and interpretation.

I integrated data transformation with data generation, beginning with the first visit to the setting, then eventually inducing regularities and patterns through iterative processes like question-answer-analysis-member check cycles. As I generated and analyzed data, I used the theoretical lenses previously described, yet also maintained an open analytic stance (following Agar, 1991) through phase one, gradually shifting to and

confirming subsequent theory during phase two of the study. This approach featured a high degree of iteration and recursion with data as explained below.

Constant Comparison

In congruence with such an approach to transforming data, I implemented the constant comparative method described by Glaser and Strauss (1967), including analyzing data that took place during data generation as well as after data analysis, an approach that is favored in naturalistic inquiry. As Erickson (2003) noted, however, such an iterative process is "slightly misleadingly called 'constant comparison'--it's not constant, it stops when you stop because you've ruled out competing interpretations." Erickson also cautioned against premature coding. Hence, I spent the first two months in the field before I started to establish tentative codes, focusing instead on different ways of describing what I was observing and hearing from the teachers. I entered my transcripts into software called Atlas-ti, a qualitative data analysis program, but did not code right away, heeding Erickson's advice to remain in an open stance and avoid premature coding. After four months of data generation, I gradually started to rule out competing interpretations through the processes I describe below of unitizing data, developing emergent categories, then bridging and extending data. (See Appendix D for a sample of units and their codes as they appeared in Atlas-ti.)

Unitizing Data

I analyzed each of my transcripts (from interviews, field recordings, and fieldnotes) by first breaking them down into individual ideas that could stand alone—a unit—whether a word, phrase, sentence, several sentences, or a paragraph. After giving

the unit a code, I then compared the following units with the first unit, developing and comparing different codes in the same manner throughout the data corpus. While unitizing, and throughout data generation and analysis, I journaled how my own background and latent theory interacted with the data, knowing that my construction was one of many possible constructions. My focus during unitizing and coding, in particular, was to stay closely connected with the data. For example, whenever appropriate I favored in vivo coding, or using the participant's words and phrases as both units and codes, like when all three teachers in each of their individual interviews talked about "looking to help," or being "emotionally supportive."

Emergent Category Designation

Well into the unitizing and comparing of codes, I started to sort and group codes into categories until all the codes were assigned, developing tentative category titles with descriptive sentences. I then started over and other alternative constructions emerged, which I then took back to the participants for their input. Engaging in Interactive Qualitative Analysis sessions, an example of how participants in naturalistic inquiry "can assist the researcher in data analysis and thereby effectively communicate the constructed realities on which they are operating" (Erlandson, et al., 1993, p. 118), also aided my decision-making process for settling on categories that made a great deal of sense according to the context and the participants, as well as to me.

Bridging and Extending Data

Bridging the data meant that I brought two or more categories together because they suggested a link between them not originally there from prior data generation

efforts. This was true when, in concert with the participants, I linked "familial collegiality" with "hashing it out," or how the teachers generated ideas. Extending the data occurred when, in the process of making an incomplete category more viable, I was able to generate data, as in the case of the category, "making things lighter," that allowed me to describe this category with more breadth and depth. I found instead of merely "teasing" and "laughter," that vehicles like stories were also responsible for "making things lighter." With a description of data generation and analysis in mind, I turn now to how I represented the data.

Textual Framework

Naturalistic inquiry affords the researcher latitude in deciding upon ways for writing a report because the focus is on rendering a case with "its complex interrelationships and multiple realities . . . in a way that enables and requires that audiences interact cognitively and emotionally with the setting" (Erlandson, et al., 1993, p. 163). The spectrum of choices for representing research swings from writing in objectivist, ethnoscientific, depersonalized, academic modes that are largely inaccessible to practitioners to modes that are fictional and simple to comprehend. I'm trying to address two audiences, so I chose a mode of writing that was somewhere in the middle. Hence, I followed Foley's (2002) eclectic approach for producing "realist narratives that are much more accessible and reflexive than either scientific realist or surrealist postmodern narrative" (p. 487). He advises that a writer consider using "common sense, autobiographical experiences, ordinary language, irony, satire, metaphor, and parody to understand everyday life" (p. 487). Such writing may include theory and the "denotative

language of science," as well as noting that researchers act "as mere mortals from various historical, culture-bound standpoints . . . still making limited, historically situated knowledge claims" (p. 487).

My portrayal of teacher collaboration also drew from Lightfoot's (1983) insight into portraiture: "Portraits capture experience . . . and make the subjects feel 'seen' in a way they have never felt seen before, fully attended to, wrapped up in an empathetic gaze" (p. 5). Her approach assumes participants to be of "myriad dimensions," and

> Searches for the essence, relentless as it tries to move past the surface images. But in finding the underside, in piercing the cover, in discovering the unseen, the artist offers a critical and generous perspective—one that is both tough and giving. (p. 6)

In "Apple Cores, Scaffolding, and Agency: A Story of Constructing Knowledge in Preschool" (Therrell, 2000) and elsewhere (Therrell, 1998), I wrote findings in a style similar to Foley's and Lightfoot's narrative approach.

Demarcations

The way in which I wrote follows Wolcott's (1994) tripartite notion of description, analysis, and interpretation:

> *Description* addresses the question, "What's going on here?' Data consist of observations made by the researcher and/or reported to the researcher by others. *Analysis* addresses the identification of essential features and the systematic description of interrelationships among them—in short, how things work. *Interpretation* addresses processual questions of meanings and contexts: "How does it all mean?" "What is to be made of it all?" (p. 12, italics in original)

These categories, Wolcott maintains, are not mutually exclusive, nor are clear demarcations always drawn between where one ends and the other begins. Hence, in my description I caution readers to look for the "often subtle shift as implicit analyses or interpretations gradually give way to explicit ones" (p. 16).

In my descriptive writing, I made various efforts to represent a level of detail that was both "relevant and appropriate" (Wolcott, 1994, p. 14), tying every decision about detail to my research purposes (chiefly my research questions and working hypotheses). My purpose with such detail was to achieve what Geertz (1973) termed "thick description." Because descriptive adequacy was difficult for me to judge, I utilized two reviewers to act as critics, alerting me to gaps, inconsistencies, ambiguities, and redundancies. And because there is a writer enmeshed in the text, naturalistic inquiry emphasizes that the "researcher-as-instrument" be clearly delineated for readers, to which I now turn.

Researcher-as-Instrument

In the naturalistic constructivism that Erlandson (1993) describes, the researcher "becomes the most significant instrument for data collection and analysis" (p. 39). My role as the primary instrument in this inquiry was based chiefly upon the values and biases I brought into my relationship with teacher collaboration. In the introduction, I have already revealed the many junctures in both my professional and personal life, when I experienced collaborative practices, and how reflecting on these experiences helped me to construct certain values and biases in regard to collaborative endeavors. Methodologically, it is also important to reveal not only my position in relation to teacher collaboration, but to also draw links between my particular idiosyncracies and thinking as a researcher with how data ended up being generated and analyzed. In other words, how did I happen to build my constructions for this study?

In conjunction with theory and context, the researcher-as-instrument plays a

major role in how data is noticed and analyzed. Motivations, interests, and goals, as well as how participant rapport and relationships evolve, enter into the coding of data. I have always been fascinated by process, or what makes something work. This has been true in particular of people and their processes. In this study, such fascination made certain data more interesting and vital than others. In order to keep track of how I came to certain decisions about data, my habit was to keep a reflexive journal as I've outlined above, in general making comments about how my identity seemed to influence the generation and analysis of data connected. The following are examples inspired from this journal that delineate my etic-emic position in relation to this study, including how the teachers related to me as a researcher.

Etic/Emic Position

In the midst of data generation and analysis, I journaled about how facets of my somewhat unique etic-emic position infused and colored my treatment of data. My etic-emic position, or insider-outsider status, was uniquely toward the middle of these two positions. I was involved on a daily basis with this school for almost six months prior to data generation. During that time I was able to maintain a fairly strong rapport with the three teachers, but I wasn't exactly sure how the participants would receive me in the context of being a research in their classroom. None of them had any previous experience with a researcher in their midst.

Time, place, and context were intertwined for the teachers and me throughout the study, making the status of my relationships twist and turn in both predictable and unpredictable ways. My roller-coaster existence at PCS changed my place or status there

in several ways, governing the manner in which the teachers and administrators considered me. Initially hired on as both a K-1 classroom teacher and as the lead teacher for the satellite school, I was perceived as a boon by the administration, and an outsider by the teachers. The administrators saw me as a welcome source of potentially stable leadership, while many of the teachers were skeptical of my abilities. After all, my resume was strong in the area of leadership and lacking in the area of elementary teaching. The teachers knew this about me, having seen my resume and talked with me about it.

After two intensive months of training (administrative and curricular), the initial zenith of my PCS career, at least in the eyes of administration, came only two weeks into the school year upon completing a leadership workshop for the school board (comprised of teachers, administrators, parents, and community members). This zenith was short-lived. Directly after the workshop I pulled aside the principal and vice-principal and tearfully told them I had to resign due to physical reasons. I was already sick, exhausted, and simply couldn't maintain the energy requirements and high degree of "with-it-ness" necessary for teaching a complex curriculum to K-1 children. I stayed another two-and-half weeks, which included helping the new teacher and children through their initial transition stage. Clearly, administration was disappointed. Enrollment in my former class was soon at 75%, costing the school invaluable revenue. However, I still wanted to be involved with PCS. Because of my research for playground manufacturers and my certification as a National Playground Safety Inspector, I wanted to make a commitment to help build a playground at each PCS site, which I conveyed to those who would, as it

turned out, become participants in this study. This commitment, starting in September of 2002, and the completion of these playgrounds almost eight months later, helped to elevate my status within the PCS community. Doing only research at PCS without any evidence of giving back to the community, had the potential to make for tenuous, even strained relationships with teachers and administrators. My consistent and vital activities in behalf of the PCS playgrounds helped my research position and insider status to grow in the eyes of all study participants. As a result of such reciprocity, my relationships almost always functioned in a climate that I would characterize as one of mutuality in the following respects: informal, easy-going, often light-hearted, and, for the most part, egalitarian.

The teachers and I agreed that my position had grown to that of an insider, a position that I maintained and deepened throughout the study, and one that engendered certain implications. As my emic, or insider position deepened, it afforded me opportunities to pursue difficult lines of questioning, sometimes repetitively. For example, I wanted to find out how the teachers reacted to me not only as a researcher, but as a researcher who was male. I did so on at least two occasions with each teacher individually, as well as in a focus group interview. Their consistent response was, in agreement with Katerina: “No, I don’t even think about it.” Just to make the point clearer, Margret said at one point: “C’mon, we’ve talked about ovaries in front of you.” My feeling was that such a level of rapport, informality, and trust fostered types of authentic, accurate, and perhaps more revealing data that allowed me to feel more confident in my

subsequent analyses, whether in coding or creating the culminating gestalt for their teacher collaboration.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has conveyed how naturalistic inquiry, a non-positivistic approach to research, advocates for multiple realities, and is designed therefore to encourage multiple constructions, or viewpoints, among participants, including that of the researcher. Such co-constructions were especially true due to my role as a researcher making efforts as a participant-observer. I relied upon participant constructions that emerged chiefly via their interviews, corroborating through both individual and focus group interviews, and digital field recordings, that were then buttressed by participant-observation and fieldnotes. Establishing trustworthiness was my main focus, striving for internal validity, or credibility (through prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, peer debriefing, member checks, and a reflexive journal), and external validity, or transferability (thick description and purposive sampling), throughout the study. Reflection and co-construction were hallmarks of analysis in this study.

In order to be co-constructive, I encouraged individual and joint negotiation in decision-making at several junctures, including times outside of the teachers' normal practices. For example, the participants had input into the choice and definition of teacher collaboration, reviewing transcripts and field notes, revising the research questions, and did member checks, including a check on the final written draft that utilized their input to enrich this case study. Infused throughout my procedures and protocols were ways that helped to insure participants a fair and ethical treatment through the course of research,

from carefully gaining and maintaining their consent, to my exit from the field and the handling of this report. With the aforementioned methods and procedures in place, I drew upon select data to write a narrative that in the next two chapters describes how the teachers founded and practiced their collaboration.

CHAPTER FOUR

FOUNDING TEACHER COLLABORATION

The data represented in this chapter address the first research question: "How did this teacher collaboration appear to be founded?" With a focus on the school, including the K-1 classroom and the three K-1 teachers, most of the data in this chapter are retrospective in nature, generated by participants' memories of the five years (mostly in the range of six to eighteen months) preceding the start of this study, December of 2002. Following the tenets of naturalistic inquiry that advocate for contextualization and "thick" description, my dual purpose in answering this first question is to afford the reader a means for understanding this context in order to compare it to other contexts. Such a contextualization is also meant to reveal the rich milieu within which the intricate web of participant constructions may be understood. Such naturalistic tenets are meant to ground readers in a process of making plausible and meaningful connections in relation to this teacher collaboration.

My aim in this chapter is to demonstrate that the teacher collaboration of the K-1 teachers was founded, or emerged from a specific context; that it was successfully (though not easily) founded due to the nature of this context and its key participants, three teachers sharing the same classroom. Hence, my description below reveals how certain people, places, events, philosophies, and processes helped to found, or create a sufficiently favorable climate for founding and practicing this teacher collaboration. While I do not claim direct correlations, my aim is to provide enough relevant, "thick" description, here and in the next chapter, so that readers may construct informed,

independent, warranted interpretations about the founding and practice of this teacher collaboration.

In order to clarify the origins from which this teacher collaboration was founded, I organized my descriptive analysis into two parts. Part A of this chapter, "School, Classroom, and Teachers," describes how PCS was established, the unique K-1 classroom, and a description to the three K-1 teachers, including the teachers' pertinent backgrounds, beliefs, and personalities that appeared to play a part in founding this teacher collaboration. Part B, "Preparing for Teacher Collaboration," includes Heather James's first-year experience at PCS and how the three teachers established a foundation for teacher collaboration. It is in this part that I try to provide readers a sense of the context that helped to shape Heather's approach to collaboration, including how it motivated her to try a new classroom set-up and a different work approach with her fellow teachers, Margret Miller and Katerina Yost. By including Heather in both parts A and B, I create an overlap of sorts. She helps provide important context for the founding of this teacher collaboration via her previous experience at PCS. And because she is the principal character in her rendition of context, we also begin to learn early on about who Heather is as a teacher in relation to their collaboration.

The following three sections of Part A describe how the school was established, the K-1 classroom, and the teachers who were to play the primary roles in the founding of this teacher collaboration.

Part A: School, Classroom, and Teachers

In this first section, after introducing "Establishing a New School," I present three subsections on: (1) the school's curriculum and instruction, (2) the major decision-making processes at PCS, and (3) the main ways in which the administration related to the K-1 teachers, followed by a summary of these subsections. This part of my description points to the major precedents and influences that relate to how the K-1 teachers founded their collaboration.

Establishing a New School

Afforded the fresh opportunity of a new charter school, PCS was able in large part to establish its own course. According to one of the school's founders and current Business Administrator, Anita Drucker, in the mid-1990's a small group of parents and teachers became dissatisfied with the Hubble Independent School District (HISD) and the public school options available to their children. After deciding to take matters into their own hands, they gained state approval of a charter school application in March of 1998. In the fall of 1998, PCS opened a small renovated six-room building in Hubble, Texas, as a state charter school.

Anita held a unique position at PCS. She was the chief organizer of the drive to charter PCS. Anita had already led several community initiatives, like the design and construction of Hubble's large, multi-faceted playground in the main city park. All those interviewed agreed that Anita was pivotal both in the school's founding and in its current operation. While the teachers sometimes misunderstood Anita, they respected her. She was a "doer," a person who saw needs or opportunities and brought them to fruition. Her

track record provided proof that she knew how to work together with people to achieve a mutual goal.

Anita's motivation for tackling the challenge of opening a charter school resided in her negative experience with her two daughters' elementary experience. She disagreed with how her daughters were made to do drills that focused on the state test, TAAS (Texas Assessment of Academic Skills). She was the PTA president at her daughters' school, and supported the new principal who wanted to implement a consistent approach to reading across grade levels. This attempt to change their approach to reading was adamantly opposed by the teachers, who threatened a work stoppage. Anita described how, "The teachers there valued what *they* wanted to do. The previous principals let them [the teachers] do pretty much whatever they wanted to do." The new principal was soon reassigned by HISD to a more isolated desk job. Anita began talking with her about starting a charter school, and convinced her to quit her job at HISD and accept the position as the first principal at PCS a year later.

In the spring of 1997, Governor Bush approved 100 more charter schools for Texas, effective that September 1st. Anita called the Texas State Board of Education in June and found out that she could gain approval of a charter school by answering nine questions. She promptly obtained an application. Anita then invited four people, three teachers and her principal friend, over to her house for dinner to discuss two questions: "If you were gonna build the perfect school, philosophically, what would it be about? What would you do and how would you do it?" These five people sat around the table for three hours that night, with suggestions ranging from paying teachers well, to having fun.

Completing the charter process required a consistent, concerted effort on behalf of the initial organizers. Anita started a weekly dinner meeting at her house. Their small cadre of five quickly grew to 16-20 people, including other teachers and parents, spending three and a half hours every Wednesday night for six months. This group spent a total of approximately 1,500 man-hours in writing the charter, focusing mostly on by-laws and curriculum models.

The PCS Charter became the formal vehicle for guiding curriculum, evaluation, and decision-making. The Charter outlines the goals, vision, philosophy, and means for achieving excellence in children's education, beginning with the following mission statement:

> PCS Charter School will ensure EVERY child realizes their maximum potential through mastery of an innovative curriculum that involves extensive partnerships with the corporate world thus creating highly motivated, critical thinkers, prepared for the world of work and a successful life. (PCS Website, 1/18/03)

This mission statement, the section of the charter most actively discussed within the PCS community, provided the first hint that "partnerships" were important at this school.

From the beginning, PCS focused on a mission. As the initial organizers shaped the school's by-laws during the last half of 1997, Anita described their focus as: "Who we were and what we believed in." They wanted to make sure the by-laws focused on the endstate of the children's education by stating, according to Anita, that: "All decisions will be filtered through the educational process as to what's good for the children." Anita said she felt that traditional schools had lost the focus on children many years ago, so "we thought it was imperative to put it in the by-laws." The secret at PCS, she said, was that: "We keep our head down and stay focused on what improves learning for children. As

long as we do that, good things come to us and they always will. We just have to stay focused on that mission." To this end, in the spring of 2002 PCS invested time and resources into the Baldrige in Education training, which is based on the Baldrige National Quality Program. This training provided some of the procedures for both the school and the classroom teachers to continuously improve implementation of the learning mission at PCS. With ITI (Integrated Thematic Instruction) and the Baldrige pieces in place, first-year Principal Paul Towson claimed that the "school-wide effort has been to create a different environment," one of "caring interactions."

Including their role in the initial organization of the school and its charter, parents were meant to play an active role at PCS. The charter stipulated that each parent was expected, as part of their child's enrollment, to volunteer a minimum of twenty hours during the school year. Such service to PCS could take virtually any form, including committee work, special events, maintaining the playground, periodic weekend cleaning, acting as a teacher's aide in a variety of classroom capacities, or fundraising.

Year in and year out, figuring out the funding of PCS was a constant struggle. Adequate funding is a typical and omnipresent challenge for most charter schools (Manhattan Institute, 2003). Additional sources of funding were always needed at PCS in order to balance the school budget. The teachers were aware of the school's funding struggles. The administration repeatedly cautioned teachers and parents that funding was tight for any project, including improvement of the facility or items related to curriculum and instruction.

Curriculum and Instruction

The three main curriculum models that the initial organizers decided upon were Integrated Thematic Instruction (ITI), Learning Network (LN), and one that focused on numeracy, Cognitive Guided Instruction (CGI), choosing them in large measure for their constructivist approach to working with children. These three parts of the curriculum at PCS were specified in the charter as "non-negotiable." Other non-negotiable pieces of the curriculum included behavior management, mostly from "Redirecting Children's Behavior" (Kvols, 1998), and two certificates that had to be completed within the first two years of teaching at PCS: Gifted and Talented Training, and Special Education. Other suggested curricula included Brain Gym (Hart, 2002) and Gardner's multiple intelligences (Kovalik & Olsen, 2002). Teachers were provided with and had to complete a minimum of thirty hours of training annually.

The teachers' overall approach to curriculum was guided by the tenets of ITI, which included two main goals: (1) "to create participating citizens, willing and able to engage in our democratic processes to improve life now and for future generations," and (2) "to help educators translate current brain research into practical strategies for the classroom and school wide" (Kovalik & Olsen, 2002, p. xiii). Teachers also used ITI to focus on five main "Lifeskills": trustworthiness, truthfulness, active listening, no put-downs, and personal best. Mid-way into the 2003-2004 school year, first-year Principal Paul Towson, with the addition of ITI to their current curricular framework in mind, confidently asserted that: "We know we're using best practices. We're in year six, so we've got it down."

The PCS curriculum also included four "specials": art, music, Spanish, and physical education. In addition to daily instruction by a P.E. teacher, three other teachers provided forty-minute, twice weekly "specials": music, art, and Spanish classes. The P.E. classes were staged either outside or in the large multi-purpose room, the Spanish teacher would come into the classroom, and both art and music were taught in specifically designated rooms. Scheduling the specials for each grade level was one of the more complex logistical tasks for which the administration was responsible, asking for teacher input at various times. Typically, as with the K-1 teachers, two specials were scheduled back-to-back, affording the teachers an eighty-minute planning period Monday through Thursday.

Most community members characterized the PCS curriculum as one of great value and that worked well, yet one that was also difficult for teachers to learn and implement. Retired PCS Principal Gwen Poulson believed that while successful, the multi-faceted curriculum was very difficult to implement, requiring a great deal of learning, time, and energy on the part of the teachers. She conceded that: "It's been difficult to get new teachers that are able to put all the pieces together. Reflective of her comment, my days of teaching at PCS had been filled with such difficulties. In my experience as an inductee (first-year at the K-1 grade level), new to the PCS curriculum, I was overwhelmed with putting all the pieces of ITI, LN, and CGI into effective practice (not to mention all the behavioral challenges I faced from children). In confronting such difficulties, I had little support from parents, administration, or other teachers, though in retrospect I wasn't proficient at asking for help.

Both the Charter and the administration encouraged a balance between teaching obligations and freedom or creativity in teaching practices. The curriculum at PCS provided teachers with a balance of obligatory and free choices. While the three main curricula were non-negotiable, each one viewed teachers as an integral, essential part of curriculum decision-making within their given frameworks. The administration provided teachers more freedom in other curriculum areas, like social studies and science. As Anita put it: "Basically you can teach science and social studies any way you want to," adding that in doing so it was important to follow the tenets and structure of ITI. Margret, having been a K-1 teacher at the school for half a year, felt that the PCS instructional philosophy attracted "the kind of teacher who doesn't necessarily want the comfortable recipe-following life." Similarly, Katerina noted how: "We teach the TEKS (Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills), but nobody comes in and says: 'You did not mention that TEKS.'" Another important part of the curriculum was for the teachers to schedule expeditions, or field trips of their own choosing. The administration encouraged teachers to deploy the expeditionary philosophy of PCS and schedule the school bus for at least one or two field trips a month. Each field trip required a teacher to make advance preparations, namely researching the field trip site, calling the site to make arrangements, and notifying parents of any special circumstances or needs.

Decision-Making

From the school's beginning, most of the teachers at PCS took the opportunity to be a part of the school's decision-making process. Anita affirmed that from the beginning of the charter process: "The one thing we promised to do is respect teachers and the

profession of teaching. And anytime you take them out of the process you diminish their rights, you diminish their professionalism." Shortly after my hire, during the Baldrige training in the spring of 2002, I asked the group about the nature of the decision-making process at PCS. Our discussion, I felt, reflected some ambiguity about what to call the decision-making process. Almost eighteen months later, I asked Anita about the decision-making process at PCS. It was difficult for her to specify by name: "I don't know. We don't have a name for it." Instead, she described the PCS decision-making process:

> If we know that a problem exists and we have the data to support that something's not right, then we take a look at it. Then the whole staff takes a look at it in our Friday meetings as to what's happenin', why is it happenin', how can we correct it, who's gonna be a part of it. We've just never run decisions any other way. It's gotta be the buy-in of everybody in order to be effective. I'm not aware of any decision that is made just by the administration. Every now and then there's something pretty insignificant, like: "Please turn your timesheets in on time."

On many occasions, Anita referred to how "data" were employed as the basis for many of the decisions at PCS.

On the other hand, Principal Paul Towson employed a specific term for the process of decision-making at PCS, "collegial." He explained that: "For the most part, if we're going to change something, it's going to be through a collegial process, either at the school level or administratively." He described this collegial process with an example from the spring and summer of 2002: "When we changed from three to two grades on a level, a committee was formed with teachers at different levels. We did research, came back, presented the information and findings – I mean it took a long time." During a faculty meeting at the start of the 2002-2003 school-year, when Paul was Vice-Principal, he made collegiality a topic of discussion, passing out copies of a short

article by educator Roland Barth, called: "Sandboxes and Honeybees." In it Barth describes the central importance of collegiality. Almost a year later, the K-1 teachers recalled this article and its emphasis on collegiality.

To one degree or another, all the teachers felt "empowered" or involved during those times when school, classroom, and teacher issues were being decided. Paul maintained that "with every decision there's always some interaction," and that the filter for all questions was whatever "is gonna be best for kids**."** For some decisions, particularly financial ones, he explained that as an administrative team: "It's really good to have four people brainstorming, then we try to go out and hear from others before we make a decision." Sometimes problems arose with the operation of the school. Principal Towson explained that: "In remedying problems, the administrative team meets weekly," and asserted that: "We collaborate just as they [the K-1 teachers] collaborate." He concluded that: There's not an authoritative, or authoritarian, or I don't want to dictate or mandate this and that. There's usually some kind of bouncing off somebody," and that: "Once we make a decision, we feel confident."

The decision-making process at PCS started with a specific structure, or as Anita put it: "You have to start with how the school works together. You have to start with the organization of the school." Starting with the highest governing body of PCS, Anita described how:

> The Governing Council is comprised of four teachers, four parents, and two members of the community, so the coordination of teachers, administrators, and parents all starts at the highest level, and that is difficult at times. Like for Paul, or whoever the Principal is, four of his staff members vote on his retention and what to pay him. It's got its areas of concern, but it works in terms of having teachers realize that they have an impact on the direction of the school. From

> there you have to take a look at the vertical teams, knowing that someone at each level from high school through K-1 is involved in either social studies, science, math, or literacy. So you take the TEKS [Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills] from K to 12, and like in Baldrige, your customer is your next level teacher, so in those vertical teams, taking a look at what needs to happen from year to year to ensure that those kids are ready for their next customer. And from there you have your grade level coordination.

I asked Anita how PCS functioned within this decision-making structure. Her quick reply was that for PCS: "The rest of it is just professional respect, and also allowing people to be who they are." This belief was illustrated by an example with staff that she recalled:

> The people who talk loud aren't any meaner than the people who talk quietly. They just sound louder (laughs). So a lot is just getting past everybody's idiosyncrasies and really getting down to the core of who that person is and what are they trying to accomplish and where is their heart in all of it. At PCS I care about the quality time they have with children. Granted, if their outfit was inappropriate for that, then that would be a problem. A lot of it is not getting caught up in things that don't matter.

To a large extent then, Anita was intent on providing an atmosphere of respect at PCS that encouraged freedom of expression among the teachers.

Most teachers at PCS were serious about their opportunity to help make decisions at PCS. Anita described one instance at the end of the 2002-2003 school-year as an exception to PCS's decision-making process. In the aftermath of a child's severe sunburn, the PCS Governing Council asking the Principal and Vice-Principal to put together a policy to make sure that students wear sunscreen when outside for a half-hour or more. She said:

> This is probably the only time a decision didn't come through the staff, and it met with some pretty stiff resistance from the staff initially. The teachers, you could tell, were a little bit hacked off, that: 'Where is this coming from and why. Why

> weren't we a part of the decision that said we have to use sunscreen policy.' They didn't like the direction where this decision came from.

On many such occasions, whether included in the decision-making process or not, the K-1 teachers voiced their opinions to the administration about school issues and processes of import to them. As the example above indicates, the way in which the administration related to teachers was not always consistent, and teachers didn't hesitate to voice this.

Relating to Teachers

Like many public schools, PCS has had difficulty with teacher retention. According to Principal Paul Towson: "Staff turnover is usually an issue, so we're looking to stabilize this year [2003-2004] – we've had so much change." As a result, turnover in relation to inductees and the kindergarten through second grade levels was especially problematic. After the end of the first school year at the new campus (2001-2002), three of the four K-2 teachers left their positions for varying reasons. The administration decided in the spring of 2002 to change from a four teacher, K-2 multi-age classroom, to one that was K-1 with three teachers. Since then, after a year that everyone regarded as successful in many respects, all three K-1 teachers re-signed contracts for the following two school years, 2003-2004 and 2004-2005.

Hence, one of the administration's goals became to focus more on supporting the teachers. Paul regarded his role in relation to the teachers as predominantly one of support. He described his philosophy, where the teachers are the "experts" within a collegial network:

> My position has always been that the teachers are the experts. Unlike a district that has these experts that come in and work with grade levels and subject areas, our teachers' assumption of responsibility is that they are the experts. I think

> people have to think they're experts in their area. If you're working with a certain grade level, then you need to know about those kids livin' in that time, developmentally where they're at.

In Paul's mind, teachers as the experts in the classroom included being comfortable in asking for help: "They have to know it's okay not to know everything – that's a part of that collegial piece." Overall, he thought that "it's difficult at PCS to be in that position where you're the expert," and that colleagues and administrators helped to support teachers, stating:

> They have colleagues they can lean on, an Instructional Coordinator who really focuses in on instructional and curriculum related issues, and a Vice-Principal who has knowledge and background with elementary education. Those two really provide the support for the elementary teachers.

Paul also described his support role as a listener: "I try to ensure that they are supported and heard." Toward the end of the 2002-2003 school year, he visited each classroom along with Instructional Coordinator Mallory. His purpose was "information seeking, understanding, needs seeking," attempting to find out what was happening with the teachers and "what further support could be provided or provided differently." The K-1 teachers also perceived Paul in this way.

Principal Towson also considered himself as a resource person for the teachers. He expressed how important it was to be considered by the teachers as such, but that: "It's not to the level that I'd like it to be. I don't think I put it out there enough with the entire community." Indeed, the K-1 teachers agreed that they didn't see this role often. Dismissing a coach-team metaphor, Paul viewed the teachers as "graduate students" in a "community of learners" where his role was to provide information: "I constantly say if there's something to find out, I can get the information so that you don't have to look it

up." He also made an assumption as a resource person: "The grad mentality is: you're here because you want something – the assumption is you want to be a part of this community of learners and here's the information." The K-1 teachers felt like they were in a community of learners, but that they had to rely on themselves first to accomplish things, and the community second.

Paul affirmed that as resource person, a major part was affording training to the teachers, or "staff development opportunities." He claimed that the teachers have "multiple opportunities to become familiar with the strategies they should be using in the learning environment with the math and literacy programs." This claim was born out in the thirty-plus hours of training that each teacher did every year, sometimes with financial support to attend training at distant cities. In the fall of 2002, the K-1 teachers attended a conference in Atlanta at the schools expense, though funding for such trips virtually dried up the following year.

Besides being a listener and resource person as a way of support, Paul explained "a system of ongoing development that encouraged people to remain focused on the philosophy of the school, and implementing it in practice." The school's method for this system was the "Friday Focus," a faculty meeting every third week that, according to Paul, "focuses on an element of our charter." For example, he said: "We'll talk about the teaching/learning cycle – regardless of what grade level you're on, familiarize yourself with this process. Bloom's taxonomy is something we want people focused on as they're engaging and facilitating the learning process." One of the features of this meeting, he noted, was to "coordinate the teachers to present and teach one another on these things."

He concluded that, in particular, for the K-1 teachers: "I see my role strictly as support – they are the experts. For the most part it's just remedying their issues. They are very much self-propelled**.**"

The PCS practice of support extended to making promotions from within the school, including four out of four hires for administrative positions: teacher/counselor Gwen Paulson to Principal in 1999, K-2 teacher Linda Mallory to Instructional Coordinator in 2002, Vice Principal Paul Towson to Principal in 2003, and grade 4-5 teacher Maria Garza to Vice-Principal in 2003. Principal Towson thought that "having Maria and Linda on board is probably the best move that could have been made. I think the way they interact encourages teachers to be the best they can be. They've been with the school from the start. What better people to have than those that have been in the trenches from the beginning."

One aspect of the support philosophy at PCS was that of teachers helping teachers. At the beginning of the 2002-2003 school year, then Vice-Principal Towson handed out copies of an article by educator Roland Barth: "Sandboxes and Honeybees." He described the article and its connection with PCS:

> It's a short piece, easy to read, which is good. He said that of all the best practices, that collegiality was the overarching phenomenon found in the system. One of the strengths of PCS is that we have embedded systemically opportunities for collegial relationships to be established, to be carried forth even in informal environments. And you see signs of it on the campus: constant coordination, caring feedback – those are the important things as you're walking down the hallway – signs that you have a collegial relationship emphasis on your campus if you have a lot of that kind of thing going on, where folks aren't necessarily doing the teachers lounge talk that's negative. It's more: "let's solve and remedy things."

He also described the teachers' access to the administration as "pretty much an open-door policy," of which the K-1 teachers had taken appropriate advantage.

Section Summary

Thus far I've presented the ways in which PCS established a new school, made decisions, and related to teachers – an initial foray into piecing together a foundation upon which the K-1 teachers would make their own decisions as they pondered and practiced their collaboration. Of importance, we begin to see such a foundation, at best, as implicitly connected to the way in which the teachers founded their collaboration—a connection, however, that nevertheless begins to describe the context in which the three teachers were successful at working together. Such contextualization becomes important in relation to naturalistic inquiry, where readers utilize context to help them transfer understandings and meanings to their given context.

In the context of a tight budget and a difficult curriculum to deliver, the administration sought ways to "solve and remedy things" through fostering a mostly collegial environment for joint decision-making. PCS was a school where the administrators professed "caring interactions" and respect for teachers. Principal Towson treated the teachers as "experts," and Anita Drucker, the Business Administrator, supported the teachers' freedom of expression, "allowing people to be who they are," at least to a large extent. When it came to curriculum and instruction, PCS afforded teachers a balance between areas that were "non-negotiable" and those areas where teachers could be more at choice, or empowered, for example, in the topics and delivery of social studies and science curricula.

The school also included a unique K-1 classroom. Its uniqueness, whether through its design or usage, is recounted below in an attempt to further contextualize and illustrate how this teacher collaboration was founded in relation to significant places, people, and events.

The K-1 Classroom

One of the unique aspects of this classroom setting arose through its design process. There were school architects, yet also teachers, whose input was pivotal in the design of this classroom. One of the teachers whose input equaled that of any other teacher was Denise Simpson. Denise was one of seven founding PCS teachers. During the first of her three years at the original campus, she taught in the same small room with two other K-2 teachers, often team teaching – successfully so according to her. Denise was another example of a teacher who was encouraged by the administration to express freely her thoughts about important school issues.

For Denise, dealing with a relatively small space was always at issue. She recalled pushing for a bigger room at the new campus "because this [classroom at the original campus] was so small." She had to do centers outside because there wasn't enough room inside. The K-2 teachers at the original campus reconfigured their space after their first year together, even to the point of having a glass wall and door removed. Opening the room permitted the teachers to facilitate whole group experiences and to divide into ability groups with greater ease. Denise explained how the open room helped them to deal more effectively with a wide range of abilities among the three grade levels.

According to her, students "really had a whole day of work at their level because we were really able to individualize their learning."

Denise recounted how meetings with the architects were open to anyone in the school community: She ended up being one of six teachers who sat down with the architects about a half dozen times. Denise remembered talking over the blueprints and that she "definitely felt listened to by the architects." She noted how "there were a lot of good discussions, even with color, then they'd come back and we'd hash it out again." The primary teachers reminded the architects that you couldn't have places where you couldn't see the kids. Denise emphasized that: "It was definitely gonna be a bigger room, because this [classroom at the original campus] was so small." The teachers' goal was to design a classroom with sufficient space for four K-2 teachers, sixty students, a loft for a library and/or resource space, and an area for learning centers. As they eventually found out, four teachers and sixty students pushed the large room to its limit in several ways.

Rather than following the typical "egg-crate" design of most schools, the physical ecology of the K-1 classroom at PCS was unique among its elementary cousins. With a 24-foot high ceiling, this sole K-1 classroom was a spacious 2,850 square feet, which included the loft that ran the length of the room (see Figure 1 below). Integrated Thematic Instruction (ITI) called for a predominance of earth tones in the classroom, so the huge walls and large square soundproofing boards were an eggshell and gunny sack color respectively. Virtually the entire east wall was a system of newly installed cupboards (summer and fall of 2003) painted almost the same color as the wall. The installed carpet on just under half the room was a rich textured tan and was slightly

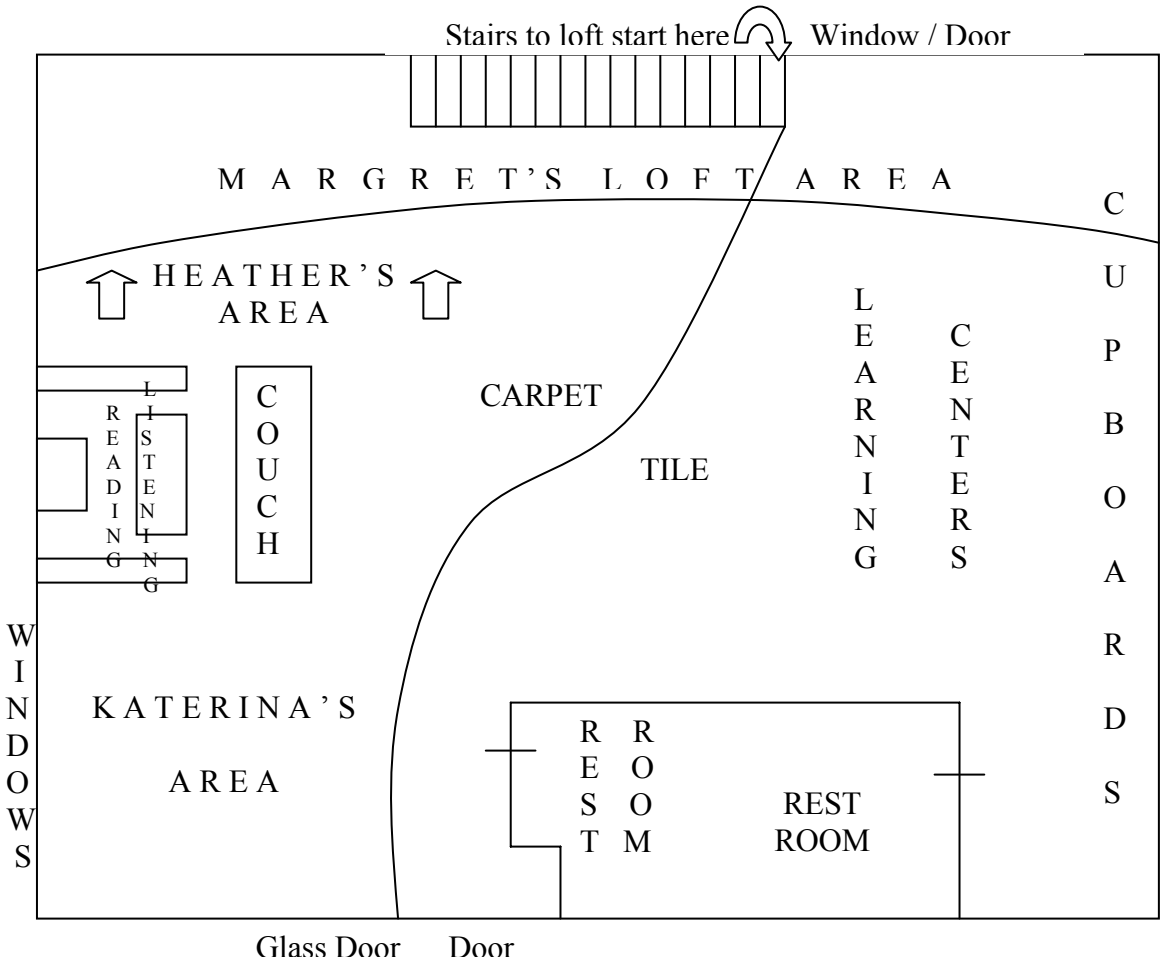

Figure 1. A schematic of the two-story K-1 classroom at PCS depicting the orientation of the teaching areas for each teacher, as well as the learning centers and other features.

scalloped on the side that wound through the middle of the room on its way to the loft stairs on the far wall. The linoleum tiles that harbored most of the learning centers on the larger half were off-white. Curtains were made for each shelving system (brown) in either medium blue or sea foam green. Each of the twelve square student tables (four for each class) closely matched the brown of the shelving. Small live green plants adorned each of these tables. Each teacher felt comfortable embracing earth tones and most of the other ITI tenets.

The teachers divided the classroom into an amalgam of different sectors and uses. They devoted just over 40% (approximately 1,200 square feet) of the classroom to common areas, including seven learning centers (computers (5), art, or the "Illustration Station," puppet/pretend play, or "Pretend Place," blocks, a sensory "Touch-It Table," an audio/reading area, and one for writing). This common area also had a central tile walkway and a carpeted sitting area for "Big Group," where all three classes came together at mid-day for instruction. Margret conducted her class in the loft (almost 600 square feet), while Heather and Katerina had autonomous classroom space on the main floor (just over 500 square feet for each teacher). Katerina was the most visible teacher in the first corner upon entering the room, while Heather chose the far corner under the loft for its relative sanctuary. Margret compared the K-1 classroom to the other classrooms: "I think we've got a fabulous space. If you look at our classroom compared to those other little ones, it's a beautiful environment and space." All three teachers were excited by the challenge of organizing this large classroom, making it one of the first topics of discussion when they first met together.

The three teachers felt free to make changes in the organization of the classroom, whether in the common areas or in their individual class areas. They made several major changes to the physical setting before the start of each school year (2002-2003 and 2003-2004). The first year, Katerina and Heather, the two main floor teachers, decided to arrange a series of free-standing shelves that provided clear demarcations between their classes and the Big Group sitting area. The second year they dispensed with these physical barriers, instead moving their shelves onto the walls. A larger and more elegant audio/reading center with a small couch, and the class guinea pigs as well, were moved in between Katerina's and Heather's class area along the western wall, in place of the computer center from the previous year. The result of these moves was to create more sight lines and open space on the carpet between the two class areas, used primarily for "Big Group," a time shortly after lunch when all three classes sat together for a lesson.

Classroom materials for the children came, in large measure, from either Heather and Margret or the children's parents. The two teachers had collected an assortment of items over their years of experience in the classroom. According to Heather, "A lot of the things that we had to work with were just things that Margret and I had saved from raising our own children." She recalled that: "There were blocks and puppets that were purchased the year before for the room, but we never really went out and purchased a lot." In addition to these materials, the teachers presented the parents each year with a materials list that requested the purchase of numerous items. Most parents complied with this request per each item.

The administration also played a part in the physical make-up of the K-1 classroom. It continued to approve and make changes in the classroom environment, though sometimes not as speedily as the teachers would have liked. The administration agreed to remove the school literacy library from the loft in the summer of 2003 so that Margret could have additional space for her class area. Anita approved the construction of four giant cupboards and the installation of sound-proofing panels – two of which have remained on the floor since July of 2003, awaiting installation. Since the beginning of the school year (2003-2004), three computers have awaited installation in bays equally spaced between the cupboards.

The elementary classroom schedule was designed to encourage planning time for the teachers. The K-1 teachers had a few opportunities during the course of each day to reflect upon the particular challenges that their students were facing or to plan future lessons. Their main planning periods were in the morning (a half hour before school) and an eighty-minute period during Specials (classes in music, art, Spanish, and P.E.). One teacher supervised all three classes during lunch (and then got lunch recess duty off) so that the other two teachers could work together for around twenty minutes at mid-day. Around 3:45 pm, after all their children had been picked up, the teachers often stayed later (though only obligated to stay until 3:45 pm) to plan lessons and conduct other business. Fridays were half days for the students, and the teachers stayed in the afternoon to attend full staff, vertical teams, or grade level meetings until 3:30 pm. The teachers were free to choose how to use planning time, whether individually or jointly. (I will cover the teachers' use of time in detail in Chapter Five.)

Section Summary

The teachers would have been hard-pressed to practice their collaboration without the specially designed K-1 classroom, unique in its size, structure, and function. This classroom went hand-in-hand with their collaborative efforts, acting as a convenient place for meetings and providing a common setting for their daily stories and discussions. The design history of this room reflects a precedent for teacher input and empowerment. At PCS the teachers feel they have freedom to act upon their classroom environment. At times the administration responded to their requests, like installing the cupboards. I turn now to an introduction of the key players—the three teachers whose identities and actions were intimately woven throughout the tapestry of this teacher collaboration.

The K-1 Teachers

In this section I include a brief description of the teachers' backgrounds, their history with PCS, personalities, and values. Such description is aimed at providing the personal and professional context that helped to lay the foundation for their teacher collaboration. These descriptions of Heather, Margret, and Katerina are a first brushstroke at revealing data that help to identify them as teacher collaborators embedded within a particular web of relationships. Readers will also see in the text how their identities are being jointly constructed by each other, a landmark of NI (naturalistic inquiry) methodology. Based mostly semi-structured interviews, I begin with the Teacher Leader, Ms. James.

Heather James

The first time I met Heather was at my PCS job interview in May of 2002. In Texas she'd most likely be described as "a long drink-a-water." Despite her nearly six-foot stature, Heather didn't carry herself as an imposing figure. With long bangs and dark brown hair draped naturally over her shoulders, she typically appeared friendly and approachable. As she busily organized her classroom, she would greet people with a smile and a cheery "How're you doing?" The one teacher who most often wore a dress, she would pepper her conversations with a chuckle, giggle, or outright laughter – almost regardless of her mood. There were times when Heather displayed a common malady of teacherhood, that of being "a little stressed out." But her signs of stress were subtle, and at such times she would focus all the more on her task at hand, usually preparing a lesson, evaluating student work, or organizing her room.

Even though most of her experience had been with third, fourth, and fifth graders, PCS hired Heather in the spring of 2001 to teach in the K-2 classroom. She had taught in the large urban HISD (Hubble Independent School District) for fourteen years, and for three years before that at a private school, which included one year of teaching kindergarten in 1984, and one year of teaching preschool in 1983, her first year of teaching. Heather had experience collaborating with another teacher for two years in an open classroom, sharing children, and found that: "It informed a lot of my decision-making for the [current] K-1 team." She had also taught multi-age with HISD at a school within a school in south Hubble, asserting: "So I had experiences with multi-age and knew that I loved it."

In a virtual sense, Heather married into the school. Her new husband already had his two children attending PCS, and Heather wanted her twelve-year-old daughter to be at the same school as her new step-sister and step-brother, "even if I didn't work here." She learned bits and pieces about the school from her husband. "He was happy with the school, but he couldn't really verbalize what it was that made it different," she recalled. Yet, she continued, the one thing that "struck the loudest when he tried to describe it, was that there's a lot of individualization for the children – that they're not all taught the same thing the same way all in unison – that that is distinct." She recognized that PCS would require "a lot more teacher planning."

Heather told me she was "nervous" about her PCS job interview, but looked forward to learning more about the school, both for her sake and her daughter's. Heather pointed out that she's "always had this dual view of this school as a parent and as a teacher." She had met Principal Poulson at a PVC (Parent Volunteer Council) meeting a couple of weeks before the interview, but everyone else at the interview was new to her. Heather was nervous because she hadn't had many interviews in her career and "didn't know all the new terms." She was concerned that she "didn't have a crystallized vision of what made them PCS, so I didn't know quite what the right answers would be (laughing), so I just kinda said it the way I felt it."

Heather held a unique position among the three teachers. First, she confirmed the importance of her role as a returning teacher. Without someone who possessed her knowledge and experience, she believed that something similar to her previous year would likely repeat itself. Secondly, Heather had also been elevated to the position of

Teacher Leader. In a humble way, Heather told me that her new position was granted to her, "just because I've been here before (laughs) and they haven't (laughs), so I can network better." She added lightly that maybe her title was "Team Leader," and indicated that neither she nor PCS were big on titles: "I don't take it too seriously. It's very collaborative."

Knowing there was no job description for Teacher Leader, and based on her past year's experience with PCS, Heather said she felt relatively free to have substantial input in terms of envisioning and organizing the K-1 classroom. And Heather was optimistic that Margret and Katerina would be open to her vision based on her experience of feeling overwhelmed the previous year: "I think they were willing to go with it (laughs) for the most part because they didn't know. They were like me last year: 'What's going on here; there's so much for me to learn; I can't do all this and have this make sense.'"

Heather felt that part of her job would be to initiate Margret and Katerina into the culture of PCS. Because of having just completed her first year with PCS, Heather figured that part of her role would be to help Margret and Katerina apply a complex curriculum, especially in regard to math and literacy lessons: "Since I had gone through just last year, it was still fresh for me and I could be very empathetic, and kinda guide, like: 'This is gonna work – it's gonna take a while – this is gonna be fine – have faith.'"

Margret and Katerina offered different descriptions of Heather. Margret described Heather as "pretty laid-back," but that there were times when: "She's uptight about a few things." Overall, she described how Heather "does seem to be kind of unruffled, quiet and soothing, so she's really easy to work with." Katerina was effusive about Heather's

flair for performing during their improvisational lessons: “I don’t know why she’s wasting her time teaching. She should be an actor in Hollywood earning millions.”

Margret Miller

Margret was frequently in motion, up and down the loft stairs, walking everywhere with a gait of purposeful determination. She willingly volunteered to be the one to have her class in the loft – the one teacher who wouldn’t imperil her head on the low drop-ceiling. With her long brown hair normally swept back into a ponytail or put up in a bun, Margret easily generated the most intensity of the three. With hazel eyes slightly narrowed, her demeanor during class and in conversation was almost always fully attentive, as if straining to discern the meaning of every action and every word. Quick with a response, Margret spoke in long staccato-like vignettes, reflecting upon her words almost as quickly as she uttered them.

Margret did her student teaching in San Antonio. Having never taught K-1 students, Margret began her first year at PCS in the summer of 2002. Before having her first child, she had taught second grade for seven years, the last three of which were in the Hubble ISD. She then stayed home for seven years to raise her daughter and son, before re-starting her teaching career at PCS. Margret commented that she was the “middle child,” in between Heather’s and Katerina’s ages, as well as in her own family, adding: “I’m comfortable with that.” When I suggested that Heather and she were similar ages, Margret corrected me: “You know, she’s a little bit older than I am. She’s maybe about five to seven years older than I am, so I’m a little bit younger.” (At the beginning of the 2002-2003 school year, Heather was 42, Margret 36, and Katerina 24 years of age.)

During her seven-year hiatus from teaching, she maintained her interest in teaching through her children. When her daughter entered kindergarten, Margret had the opportunity to see the classroom from the perspective of a parent. Margret noted how her daughter's HISD elementary school "was just wonderful because they did multi-age, and they did a no-graded, project-based curriculum." She was impressed with her daughter's kindergarten teacher, "who was just amazing." This is the teacher from who Margret got the idea to have a weekly parent letter and end of bloc project show for the parents. Margret felt like she was "learning all these things which piggybacked onto what I already felt either intuitively or already did." She claimed that: "I just feel so strongly about education – I just wanna do so much. It's so exciting to me." Even while she was at home, she felt she was always teaching: "When my kids were babies, I was teaching little baby music classes in the neighborhood and people would come, and then when he was in preschool, a group of friends and I – a couple were teachers that I used to work with at school – all got together and we did a preschool co-op."

Margret thought that in some ways her co-op preschool was similar to the teaching environment at PCS, remembering that:

> It was really great just to sit down and go anywhere you wanted to go with other professional teachers and there was nobody to give you any grief. It was our program. We could do whatever we wanted to, so we just field-tripped and went places and we just did it. And I feel like what we're doing now is a little bit of an extension of that.

Margret consistently spent time improving her profession. Training other teachers in the area of emergent literacy was important to Margret:

> To this day, I go around and teach preschool training workshops for some of the books and things that we made. We did a lot of literature and teaching them how

> to write with kids and to make little knock-off books with the kids and the kids are doing their artwork and there are different projects in books.

Margret's story of arriving at PCS was initiated by her network of teacher-friends. They recommended that she investigate PCS as a school that might represent their shared philosophy of teaching. She was "a little bit nervous" about her job interview, but this was softened by knowing three people at PCS: Principal Poulson, a veteran PCS teacher, and a PCS parent who had been a school counselor at Margret's former elementary. They all knew some of Margret's teacher-friends and her teaching philosophy. Margret knew that they knew this, and she felt that her philosophy "totally fit" with PCS's, adding that: "I just felt like I was supposed to be here." The interview turned out to be a "fun" experience for Margret because "there was no pressure – I wasn't even at first sure I wanted to go back to work." About ten to fifteen minutes into the interview, Margret explained, "I felt like I had a job, because in awhile they came in and said: 'Could you do these trainings?'" A part of her motivation in accepting the K-1 position was that her five-year-old son would be a direct beneficiary. She felt that he would be in a good situation in Heather's class, explaining that now "everything I do I feel like I'm doing for my own child, as well as the other fifteen."

Margret tried to avoid any schedule conflicts with PCS summer faculty trainings. At the conclusion of her interview, she sat down with the administrators to write down in her calendar any training dates. Unfortunately, several days after her interview, the school had to move the ITI training to the week before school. The problem was that Margret had gone home and scheduled a family vacation during that week before school,

which the parties had determined would be an open week. Not wanting to disrupt or disappoint her family, she kept her vacation schedule and missed the ITI training.

Fortunately, as she remembered in her job interview, Margret already reflected much of the ITI training in her teaching philosophy, so it was not a training that was urgent for her to attend. For example, as per ITI, Margret believed that "everything has to go together, everything has to be connected. I really need to see the whole picture, and then I need to see how everything relates." She indicated how much she wanted to see the whole picture and have curricular pieces fit toether: "It's a sickness with me almost. They [Heather and Katerina] actually laugh at me because I just, everything -- I want everything to fit some way, to go into something else."

Recalling her choice about whether to share a classroom or be by herself, Margret thought she could be comfortable in either situation, that each had its own benefits. She felt "perfectly fine" being by herself, and also "perfectly comfortable" and "flexible" enough to adapt to a shared classroom. After all, she claimed: "I think one of my strengths is working with people. I'm a real social person – I don't like to be by myself. I really enjoy people and that's got to be a part of it." In choosing the option to be in a shared classroom, Margret concluded that: "I am doing exactly what I should be doing and what I want to be doing."

In working with people, Margret believed that despite having "really strong ideas about education and how it should be, even more important than that would be my relationship with the people I'm working with" and how "that goes even more here." She pointed out that she didn't want anybody to be upset with her. Margret described how she

would “just get so excited about doing things certain ways,” but that: “It’s not like I care necessarily that everything is just so – I’m not left-brained at all. I’m pretty right-brained, so I’m pretty flexible so I can go with the flow.”

In order to work closely with people, she emphasized that: “Personality is just everything. It takes more than just having the right philosophy – it really does take personality.” She hypothesized that: “If you have three stubborn people, then that makes it hard to work together – certain personalities don’t mix.” For example, she explained, “if you had three completely laid-back personalities, I don’t think that would be good.” From her perspective, Margret thought that: “What’s good about us is that we have three different personalities. Heather is just a laid-back personality, which I think is good – to kind of balance off.”

Margret also described herself in relation to Heather and Katerina, stating that she was “probably the most intense of the three of us.” She explained how she was “also social enough” or “intuitive” in working with people: “The whole intuition thing is big, and I am a real intuitive person,” and “sometimes you can just tell” how to respond to people. She claimed that: “I definitely have a lot of energy, so sometimes I feel like I run people over. If I’m ever too bossy, I think they know the tone or reason for it is my altruistic intentions,” and that the other two teachers “don’t seem to mind too much.” Margret viewed herself as “a talker,” explaining how she “could just go on and on.” She thought that at times this was problematic for Heather and Katerina, but that talking a lot was the way she resolved problems: “If I can’t talk about it, I worry about it, so having talked I think I go home lighter hearted at night.” Margaret thought that Katerina also

liked to talk, though she thought that Heather didn't "spill it as much, and that Heather didn't seem "to need quite as much [talk] as we do."

Katerina Yost

Katerina stood ramrod straight, with brown hair parted in the middle, cascading in long sweeps to either side of her intense light blue eyes. The youngest by a dozen years, she spoke excellent English, albeit with a slight German accent. After attending a Gymnasium ("gĭm-nä'z-ē-^{oo}m," a school in Germany for students headed to university) since fifth grade, Katerina studied elementary school teaching at the University of Koblenz-Landau, graduating in 2001. She asserted that: "I love teaching. I was one of the only teachers that left school ready to teach."

Like many teachers, Katerina had never heard of a school with three teachers for each of three classes in the same room. "In Germany," she said, "what I learned was more like making lesson plans together, but then doing them yourself." After graduation, she followed her fiancé, a musician, to his hometown of Hubble, Texas. Katerina quickly started subbing in two school districts adjacent to HISD, then for a month in a fourth grade class at an HISD elementary. Before being hired, she spent four days as a PCS substitute for one of the four K-2 teachers in May of 2002.

As a new full-time PCS teacher in July of 2002, Katerina developed a desire to start off each day with everything organized and ready well before the kids' arrival at ten 'til eight. She soon came to enjoy and depend on her morning routine of parking in the same spot by 7:30, which gave her the feeling of beginning the day "in control." The first year had many "long days," and Katerina commented that: "Sometimes I wish I could go

home earlier, but it's really interesting – it's really good for me." Katerina described herself as "flexible" and "pretty positive," adding that "when you're teaching you really can't have an ego."

Katerina was a first-year teacher, or inductee to the profession. She hadn't taught kindergarten before and didn't learn anything about kindergarten in Germany. She exclaimed: "I didn't know what to work on in kindergarten!" In the beginning, two of her approaches to learning her new job were to observe Heather and Margret in action, and, to a lesser extent, to ask them questions about lessons and working out issues with her students. Margret thought that Katerina was "just the perfect sponge," or an observer-mimic with an intuitive ability to observe something and implement it successfully with her own students. Katerina's rationale for her observation strategy was that Heather and Margret "just have a lot of experience and it's better to be an observer." For example, as Margret finished doing a Venn diagram project for her class, she decided to add a title line to each circle and the word "both" to this space inscribed by both circles. Katerina basically mimicked Margret by using the same title and the same adaptation of title lines and "both" for her version of the project.

Katerina brought certain abilities and beliefs to this classroom. She had more of a prowess with computers and software, so Heather and Margret were glad to encourage her role of, as Katerina described it, "the technology person," or "tech freak," facetiously adding: "I know how to use a cursor and the mouse." Katerina became known as the "Techno Lady." In late July I had walked into the teacher's work room where Heather and Katerina were talking about how to copy off the spelling instructions for Heather's

class. Heather was having a little trouble figuring out how to copy in two columns so as not to waste paper. Katerina ended up showing her how (after Heather asked her to help) to copy into two columns, explaining why the copy machine wouldn't do it—because it was reading the excess paper. Katerina jokingly said that two columns was plenty—only eight sheets of paper needed for sixteen kids. A couple of week later Heather asked Katerina for bus clipart to put on their joint procedures letter. Katerina responded immediately and had the clipart on the page within a minute. Heather was amazed and thanked her with enthusiasm.

Katerina believed that being organized was important to collaboration, yet she thought that "all three of us are organized in very different ways." She explained how she was "this person that writes everything down" in an attempt "to be very organized." Her opinion of her own creativity was less than stellar: "I don't think I'm a very creative person, coming up with ideas. I have a hard time doing that."

Katerina confirmed that humor played an important role in collaboration, stating: "You have to have a good laugh." She thought that humor could be used for "venting," adding that "some things are just hilarious!" She also believed that laughter, letting go, and taking on one problem at a time had important places in her teaching:

> You can't be teaching without laughing. I think you have to have a good laugh. If you take it too seriously you're gonna have serious problems at some point. Letting go is important. In the beginning I literally took work home with me -- I had dreams of school and what could go wrong. But you don't have to fix everybody's problem everyday -- just one problem at a time. And I think laughing helps with that.

Having worked with Katerina for almost a year, Margret described Katerina's personality: "I'd say she's a mix. She can be really laid-back and then every now and

then she's uptight about something, but she totally accepts things and kind of goes along with it." Margret viewed Katerina's personality as "probably more similar to our personalities – every now and then we get uptight about something, but for the most part we can go with the flow. We're pretty flexible people." Margret recalled Katerina's story about how her (Katerina's) father said she (Katerina) could never be a teacher because of her extreme intensity. Margret laughed, countering that Katerina "can go with the flow with the kids and with us too." Margret added that: "It's kind of nice to have her as a first-year teacher because she's in that learning frame-of-mind right now and does seem to take things in that vein most of the time."

Section Summary

These descriptions of Heather, Margret, and Katerina are a first brushstroke at piecing together data that help to identify them as teacher collaborators embedded within a web of relationships. In sum, even though Heather, Margret, and Katerina were three Caucasian married women, each with a four-year university degree from a teacher education program and a license to teach in Texas, they represented a mix of ages, cultures, backgrounds, personalities, and teaching experience. While Heather arrived in Texas from Detroit when she was seventeen, Margret was a native of Texas, and Katerina had been raised in a German culture. Heather and Margret were in the process of raising their children, while Katerina was newly married. Heather had recently entered into the machinations of a blended family, while Margret had been married for ten years. Heather and Margret were the veteran teachers with almost twenty-five years of teaching experience between them (though they had a relative lack of experience at the K-1 grade

level), while Katerina was in her inductee year. While the teachers had little or no formal training with teacher collaboration, they each had some experience with it.

Within a context of slightly different backgrounds and experiences, the teachers described themselves and each other as having particular characteristics and roles. They were no longer sure, after a passage of several months, whether these were self-assigned or assigned to each other. Regardless, they did come to a consensus, in which I concurred, about which teacher had which characteristic or role. Heather, we determined, was mostly easy to get along with, accepting, humble, optimistic, empathic, and flexible, more of a listener than a talker. Beneath her easy-going presentation, Heather was nevertheless a focused, insightful, and energetic person. She wasn't afraid to address important issues and express her feelings. Margret and Katerina quickly recognized Heather's interest in and talent for improvisation. Heather, the most veteran teacher, the one with experience team teaching in a multi-grade classroom, and the one familiar with PCS's culture, was looking to help Margret and Katerina adjust to a new school, new classroom, and a pedagogically difficult curriculum. She was the one who came with a vision and who was seeking to empower Margret and Katerina in actualizing that vision. Of the three teachers, Margret emphasized the most how curriculum pieces should fit together in some kind of logical way. Gregarious and bright, Margret was consistently the most intense of the three teachers, and was teased by Katerina that she might be "bossy" at times. Perhaps closer to the truth, Margret described herself as "passionate, driven, and focused," which she thought was balanced by her "intuitive, social side. She brought a sizable collection of books and resources to the classroom, soon becoming known as a

resource and referral person like Heather. Like Margret, Katerina could also be very talkative and intense at times. Like the other two, Katerina was "flexible" about whatever outcomes they eventually decided. She had an idea of collaboration from a limited experience of team planning during her teacher education. She liked being an observer and implementing her observations of Heather and Margret into her own lessons. She felt that it was important not to have an ego as they arrived at decisions. Katerina liked being organized, having routines, and seemed to have an excellent memory for detail, not having to write many things down in order to remember them. She claimed that she was not very creative, preferring her role as the technology expert in the group. Katerina believed in humor, laughter, and letting go as important ways to cope with the stress of being a teacher. Occasionally uptight, she was generally "laid-back" and able to go along and get along with the Heather and Margret. All three teachers emphasized the importance of personality and relationships, and having adequate, uninterrupted family time. I will continue to flesh out their particular characteristics and roles throughout much of the remaining text.

With the school, classroom, and teachers in mind, and with an aim to illustrate the foundation from which teacher collaboration emerged, I turn now to Heather's journey toward collaboration and how the teachers initiated their collaboration.

Part B: Preparing for Teacher Collaboration

As a way to further contextualize the school, classroom, and the teacher identities from which their collaborative practices emerged, the following three sections describe (1) Heather's first year at PCS, (2) her vision for a new classroom and working

relationships, and (3) the events leading to the teachers' coming together for the first time. In the first section below, my re-telling of Heather's experience at PCS further contextualizes the teachers' motivations to pursue collaboration. Having arrived a year before Margret and Katerina, the story of the three teachers coming to work together begins with Heather and her first year at PCS.

Heather's First Year at PCS

PCS hired Heather as a K-2 teacher in the spring of 2001. She was one of four new K-2 teachers undertaking the prospects of working in a classroom where sixty children were divided into four classes. I asked Heather if, during the job interview, collaboration was brought up in any way. She reacted with: "No, no. I didn't get that sense." Heather mentioned that one of the current K-2 teachers (one of three who didn't transfer to the new campus, all of whom left PCS for other jobs) expressed interest in who she was and how she might solve problems. However, the one question she remembered most was the one most difficult for her to answer: "How do you go about working with difficult co-workers." She didn't remember her exact response, but the question prompted her to look around and ask herself, laughing: "Who are the difficult people here?" She said she still hadn't figured that out, and observed that, "it's a challenge when you have strong personalities and they have particular views and you can't agree, so I'm aware that that is a problem." However, she added: "I don't feel like it's been a big problem since I've been here."

Heather said she felt that her first year at PCS in a shared classroom was "different." She reflected about the circumstances that made it different for her:

> There were four classrooms . . . so it was louder and more chaotic. And the particular children had strong personalities and were very loud and chaotic too. Since we were all in the same room, we all had to deal with all those issues. It didn't just affect that one class. It affected everybody. We wanted to help, but then had so many things going on, so it was really hard to get the ball rolling. I wanted to offer help but not control the situation because it's somebody else's turf. What do you do? And we didn't know each other, and we didn't know the grade level. And Linda [one of the K-2 teachers] knew the PCS way.

Added to this set of circumstances was the fact that the teachers started the school year at the original campus, not knowing when they would transfer over to the new campus. To Heather:

> It felt like we were just camping for the first part of the year and just putting up with a lot of stuff. That's not a good way to start a year, to set the tone, and to say that these are your procedures and this is how we do things here. I think everybody felt like it's gonna be a whole other way of doing it when we get to the new site. Then there's the whole logistics of moving -- very time-consuming and energy-draining, so that was awkward and it raised the stress level really high.

Describing Heather's first year, Principal Paul Towson recalled (as Vice-Principal at the time) that the four teachers had been "thrown into a situation that they weren't comfortable with. They just weren't as willing to invest time in using a space like that in a way where they could do some collaborative, team teaching things – still trying to segment within an open space." Even though physical barriers had been set up, this classroom experience was difficult for Heather because of all the transitions and the interruptions they caused. She noted that: "Transitions are very chaotic in kindergarten-first. It's just loud. Last year there were those transitions happening right in the middle of somebody trying to have an intense meeting time, and that was just waaaa."

Another difficulty for Heather was the range of grades: K, 1st, and 2nd. While she had some experience with multi-age instruction, Heather disagreed with having a three-grade span within one class:

> One of the big things that was an issue last year was that it was K-1-2, and we had a lot of very young kindergartners, and it felt almost cruel to put them through the steps of a first grader and even a second grader because usually when you multi-age you teach to the top. Add to the chaos the different personalities and the stretches you have to make for that. So we were very vocal – it was our feeling that it was very hard for the kindergartners – it brought up to say: "why are we doing multi-age with these three groups, it's very hard for these kindergartners to do that." We didn't want the second graders acting like kindergartners, but we didn't mind the kindergartners trying to act like second graders. But we knew that was also kind of cruel (laughs).

Heather confirmed that the scheduling constraints may have made it difficult for collaborative processes to occur among the four teachers during the previous year: "We were for the most part on different schedules for specials," which made joint planning time impossible during the day. A lack of common planning periods, a perceived lack of space, due in part to one more teacher, one more class, and fifteen more students per square foot than the following year, and a lack of time to set up class before school started, were some of the contextual constraints that made working together a difficult proposition in the 2001-2002 school year.

While Heather perceived the lack of space as an inhibitor of working together on common classroom areas, she also agreed that a lack of space helped to create a feeling that each teacher wanted to be autonomous—and to be able to feel some measure of control in their teaching. She regarded this desire for autonomous control, in part, as a response to the perceived chaos in the classroom. Comparing last year to this year, she noted that: "It was louder and more chaotic, and the particular children had strong

personalities and were very loud and chaotic too." She viewed the situation as feeling "mostly like a lack of control" and that "you just wanted to control your kids." Heather also recalled that teacher autonomy was a prominent disposition, despite good intentions on the part of the four teachers: "We wanted to help, but we had our things to deal with too, so it was really hard to navigate those waters – just like triage time. Survive if you can." Heather also explained: "I wanted to offer help, but not control the situation because it's somebody else's turf." She had a great deal of respect for the other three teachers, calling them "brilliant, marvelous, and congenial," but, she added: "I don't think we really entered into it feeling like a team, like a marriage of our profession."

Initially, the four teachers did attempt to collaborate. During the first nine-week block, they team-taught science and social studies. Heather described the way they organized a unit on the human body:

> We all taught one aspect of it and rotated the children through, so you got to know the other kids a little bit better, and we all had to collaborate a lot to get that in place – to set that up – the schedule, who's gonna go where, when, who's gonna teach what, what will that be like, does that work well with what I'm gonna teach. And we had to come up with a lot of activities that made sense. It wasn't just like here, do this kit (laughs). It was kinda like, OK we have to get the kids to understand the circulatory system -- how do you do that? (laughs) It was very creative, fun, but very time-consuming, and that ate up a lot of our collaborative discussion.

I asked Heather if it was helpful in this case not to have to prepare four different lesson plans. "Right, right," she replied. "We were trying to make the job easier."

Yet, such collaboration came to an end after the first nine-week block. Heather concluded that: "We lasted that first nine weeks because we found that it's not

necessarily easier; it was very interesting, but we dropped that idea forever" (laughs). She remembered several reasons why their collaborative teaching came to an end:

> A lot of it was that time constraint of having to be somewhere -- not taking things naturally like: you have this amount of time, OK up and move (laughs) with the class. It was mostly like a lack of control. You wanted your kids to control. That dynamic with other people's kids – it was hard to remember their names and what their personality issues were. It was like you were teaching the subject matter instead of the children.

The four teachers tried another area of collaboration in relation to how they organized the classroom. Constrained by time, Heather described their organizational process:

> The setting up of the classroom too – it was kinda like, let's just put this together real fast because we gotta teach tomorrow (laughs). You know, you do that, you do that, you do that, and it wasn't a whole lot of discussion – very minimal on what we wanted the whole room to be like. It was basically, here's your place, here's your place, here's your place. We have to share these materials – OK let's put 'em here.

While attempting to organize joint learning centers, Heather said the teachers encountered space constraints: "There was so little space." She lamented that: "We tried to do a reading loft, but then how do you manage that, and there were shelves that had writing materials and art materials, but there really wasn't space to say, OK, here's a center where you can do this." Heather agreed that each teacher wanted to be more autonomous in order to feel some measure of control in their teaching.

Heather also had challenges with her own class and the PCS curriculum, feeling that "it was a lot." She had her own challenging children to contend with, and a new challenging curriculum to implement:

> At PCS we don't have textbooks. We don't have set curriculum's -- the packaged, store bought, here's your kit, go with it. So we were writing everything ourselves

> and merging it in some areas like the social studies and sciences, completely on our own, trying to learn CGI [Cognitively Guided Instruction], which is fascinating, but you really have to know a lot of what's going on in that technique, and the reasons to be able to apply it and see what you're doin'. And the same with LN [Learning Network], taking that literacy – the reading from step one was fascinating, but very difficult – and I was very unsure. In a lot of ways I didn't know how to do those things the way PCS wanted me to do them.

In dealing with her students and the PCS curriculum, Heather said she was glad to have had years of previous teaching experience, along with a lot of patience, and she had a sense that: "Everything would be fine and in the long run to have faith."

For the most part, Heather felt that her fellow K-2 teachers did not emphasize collaborative processes, including teamwork. Instead, she felt like she and the other three teachers in the classroom resorted to working in mostly autonomous ways, "because we were all struggling for our own survival." It was the first year for all four teachers in this classroom, and no one had taught at the kindergarten level before: "We were all struggling with a new grade level and how to solve a whole lot of problems. We didn't have a solid math curriculum, and we had the TEKS [Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills] to work with, and had units that other teachers had worked with so we were trying to blend all that together." Heather confirmed that with no texts, no packaged curriculum kits, and a complex curriculum to implement, along with time and space constraints, that the task of teaching just her specific class was a great deal to undertake in itself. Katerina, while a K-2 substitute, observed that the teachers "all did their own thing," and that: "There was no interaction between the four teachers – they all had their own classrooms. It was like having walls, just not as quiet." She described being in the K-2 room as "so cold because they [the teachers] weren't on the same schedule. They went on break for a

different schedule. I mean I was just sitting over there with my class reading and Ms. Brown's class would just stomp through the classroom to go outside for recess."

It was in this context that Heather first came to know Katerina. Prior to Katerina's hiring, Heather became familiar with her in May of 2001 when Katerina substituted for four days as a teacher in the K-2 room. Before and after school, Heather said she would usually offer Katerina help. She recalled that Katerina didn't seem to need much help, and noted: "I had a peripheral understanding of how her classroom management was and how she was doing, and I remember thinking I wasn't very concerned – everything seemed to be going very well for her." When it came time to interview Katerina, Heather felt confident in Katerina's ability to work with young children in the classroom.

Over the summer of 2002 some significant numbers changed. With input from Heather about the difficulties and constraints that she had experienced, the administration decided that instead of four teachers, 60 children, and four classes, there would be three teachers, 45 children, and three classes of K-1 students (a switch from K-2). Each of the three teachers (Heather, Margret, and Katerina) would have fifteen students apiece (same ratio as before), and would have an 80-minute joint-planning period Monday through Thursday. As a result of these changes, Heather grew more optimistic about a fresh start. She was excited about the potential for transforming the classroom with two new colleagues.

Heather's Vision

Prior to hiring Katerina or Margret, Heather knew that she would be the only one of four teachers to return to her classroom, and soon after the school year ended she

began to formulate a vision for how she wanted things to be in the classroom. Heather was determined not to repeat her experience with chaos and a lack of teamwork, wanting the next year to be different: “I think for me it was a reaction of knowing what made my life so difficult and wanting to avoid that (laughs).”

Part of what Heather envisioned had to do with fellow teachers. As mentioned, she wanted a “team,” or “a marriage of our profession.” Hence, Heather wanted to ensure that any future hire in her classroom would have a commitment to collaboration: “I knew of its [collaborations] potential from working at the 3-4 level with another teacher for two years in a ‘school within a school’ experiment that I helped to initiate.” Fortunately, PCS afforded teachers a prominent role in deciding future teachers, so Heather was able to ask questions of and argue for teachers who showed promise for teamwork. During the interviews she described a recurring thought that helped to guide her assessment of prospective teachers: "Sooo, at least one of you is gonna have to work as a team partner." (In the interviews she was thinking that there would be just two teachers in her classroom and that one would be in the science room.) She recalled asking each interviewee about her preference for either working alone or with another teacher: "Of these two situations, which are you more comfortable with?" Heather took it to be a good sign that both Katerina and Margret had indicated “ rather work with somebody than go off and do [their] own thing and have more control." Margret and Katerina confirmed Heather’s assessment of their preference to work together in the large K-1 classroom rather than in a more solitary fashion in a room with one class.

When it came to values, philosophy, and teaching style, Heather thought that the three of them had a lot in common:

> We have similar values and similar ways of how we want the children's experience to be. Our vision is fairly close together, where other people--it's like parenting, it's like your style. It has to do with your values and what kind of outcome you want to have that determines what your behavior is gonna be and how we structure things and we have a lot of commonality there.

She added, laughing: "And a lot of it's luck!" in reference to hiring teachers who would be compatible.

A second part of Heather's vision pertained to curriculum, in particular, her valuing of children's play and experiential learning. She had found that her kindergartners in particular were "sooo wiggly," and she remembered that as a child she learned more effectively by doing: "You could talk to me 'till you were blue in the face, but until I've done it or experienced it and got all my senses involved in it, I don't really get what you're talking about." In response to her new knowledge of teaching kindergartners and first-graders, as well as her difficult experience of the previous year, Heather envisioned "centers and experiential activities, as much hands-on and motor-coordinated stuff, and the more imaginative things that I could get in there, it would be better—so I definitely wanted to have some centers." She also included a block center in her list, as well as an immersion center (which became "Pretend Place") that was a dramatic play area reflecting a current theme, an art center (which became "Illustration Station"), and a "Touch-It Table because the kids love anything gooey, pouring, or spilling, or smushing (laughs)—and that's very soothing to their nerves and good for their fine-motor coordination, and it's very social, and it's enjoyable."

While her view of learning helped to define her vision of what she wanted in the classroom, her vision was also reflected ITI and her love of art:

> Through the ITI training, it was very clear that we needed an immersion center and that's where the Pretend Place came in, so that was a more dramatic play area. After ITI it was like: that's perfect, that's the immersion place [Pretend Place], and it changes with the themes and the things that you're studying. I definitely wanted art, 'cause art's a big part of my life.

Heather emphasized that she did not want history to repeat itself. During the months before the official start of the 2002-2003 school year, she took three specific steps to avoid repeating the tumultuous experience of her first year at PCS. First, she explained that even before meeting the new teachers, "When I was working with the floor plan and thinking of the different centers that I've heard about from other teachers, I was able to visualize certain aspects that worked well, picturing what made them work well in that space and with our schedules and with that population." Second, Heather felt confident in her ability to communicate this vision to her future co-workers. She reasoned that Margaret and Katerina "were willing to go with it [her vision] for the most part because they didn't know. They were like me the first year: what's going on here, there's so much for me to learn—I can't do all this and have this make sense." Third, she decided to communicate her vision partly in the form of a floor plan and a schedule: "Over the summer before we got together, I did a little floor plan: I think this should go here, this should go there. I mean I planned a lot of things out that way: I think this will work, this is a good schedule." Heather would present this vision to Margaret and Katerina during their first meetings before the school year started (Interview, Heather, 1-6-03).

Coming Together

While their journeys to PCS as teachers were different, somehow, in the summer of 2002, Heather, Margret, and Katerina came together at the same school, intending to be in the same K-1 classroom. Initially, getting all three teachers together was problematic. Katerina spent much of the six-week summer break in Germany visiting family and friends, returning ten days before the start of school. As soon as Katerina returned, Margret took off on a long-planned family vacation. While Heather was able to meet separately with them, their first joint meeting wasn't until the teacher work day on the Friday in mid-July before school started the following week. Similar to the previous year, Heather knew "that there would be very little time before class started" to organize the room or plan curriculum. Because the ITI training was being held in the large K-1 classroom, any attempt to organize the classroom would have to wait until the ITI training was finished, leaving only three days before school started.

While Margret didn't meet Katerina until three days before school started, she had several opportunities to interact with Heather in the summer of 2002. The first time Margret met Heather was at her interview in late May. After Heather said a couple of things, Margret said she had this feeling right away about her: "I just thought she's just such an easy-going, happy-go-lucky person – an easy personality, and then when I started talking to her – she just thinks the same as I do." The following week the two attended a three-day literacy training (LN), followed by a math training (CGI) two weeks later. They arrived late at each training, pulling into adjacent parking spots at almost the same time. Margret took this as a sign that they were "on the same page." She talked about how nice

it was to walk in together as fellow PCS teachers. At the first training the two took an opportunity to sit down and talk about their teaching philosophies and "to talk about what we wanted to do – kind of where we were going to go," Margret said.

Heather realized that in order to bring her vision to light, her approach to working with Margret and Katerina would be vital for any success. Heather correctly assumed that Margret and Katerina "would be feeling the way I was last year with so much new information – that they would be overwhelmed and that they needed to lean on each other a little bit." She felt that Margret and Katerina had similar values. For example, as Heather put it, on the one hand they "all definitely wanted to have centers and use some of that space because we wanted to have more play." On the other hand, Heather said: "I didn't know how things were gonna work with two new personalities, so it wasn't like I knew everything 'cause I didn't (laughs)."

Section Summary

Because of Heather's difficult experience her first year, and because of her preference to work together more with teachers in this setting, she hoped and envisioned that the coming school year would tend toward more collaboration and less autonomy in the shared K-1 classroom. Heather was able to have a great deal of input into who her new co-teachers would be, testing the "collaborative waters" from the beginning by asking Margret and Katerina to choose between teaching alone or teaching together. Heather also "set the tone" by empathizing with Margret and Katerina in regard to their upcoming challenges as new teachers to PCS, then empowering them in how the room

was organized and their curriculum delivered. Such joint processes were evident from the beginning.

Chapter Summary

While providing glimpses of who these teachers were in relation to their collaboration, as well as the contributions of PCS and the K-1 classroom, this chapter also depicted a context in which key personnel took steps to found this teacher collaboration. To a lesser extent in the next chapter, I will continue such contextualization. But more than context, this chapter described the key participants and how they initiated (Heather more so in the beginning) events that built a foundation for collaboration, or fostered a climate that could foster teacher collaboration.

We saw how key personnel at PCS, despite their somewhat diverse backgrounds, helped to found this teacher collaboration. In particular, I depicted Heather James as the central figure responsible for initiating this teacher collaboration. From both her previous successful collaboration experience and the experience of a difficult first year at PCS, she envisioned a different classroom with common areas that would require collaboration, including a plan for joint learning centers. But Heather was by no means a lone figure in the founding of this teacher collaboration. In the beginning, even before PCS became a reality, collaborative events were in motion, like when Anita and a group of teachers and parents worked together to found PCS. Teacher input, as an example of collegiality, helped to design the spacious K-1 classroom. The administration supported teachers in many ways, providing a daily eighty-minute planning period, working together with them to "solve and remedy things," as with new cupboards to resolve their storage problems,

thereby helping to build a context or climate in which Heather felt empowered to initiate teacher collaboration. After all, the teachers were "experts" and seen by the administration as people who should, to a large extent, have the freedom "to be who they are."

We saw that while Heather felt empowered, she also empowered her co-teachers, Margret and Katerina. Such an approach to this classroom was not automatic. Heather was in a position to exercise far more than a one-third share of power. She had already been at PCS and in the K-1 classroom for a year. She had the most teaching experience and was the designated Teacher Leader for the K-1 program. She could have set a tone for working together where she exercised the majority of power. Instead, Heather wanted to foster a process of decision-making where the teachers emphasized and practiced equality, both in terms of accessing and exercising decision-making power. How power was exercised remains a topic for the next chapter. Hence, from the context and initial foundation described in this chapter, Heather, Margret, and Katerina proceeded to build and practice their teacher collaboration, to which I now turn.

CHAPTER FIVE

THEIR PRACTICE OF TEACHER COLLABORATION

In addressing the second research question, "How did the teachers appear to practice this teacher collaboration?" I portray in this chapter the many ways, both content and process-wise, how Heather, Margret, and Katerina practiced their teacher collaboration. I use the term "their" because I believe the collaboration to be mostly theirs. Even though I played a role as a participant, I was never an "insider," at least not in the sense of truly being in their inner circle. I was among them, but I wasn't *with* them as they initiated their collaboration. They considered me an asset in the operation of their classroom, much in the way one might view a "teacher's aide." Hence, from both perspectives, the teachers and mine, and with no data to support otherwise, I could not justify a part of this collaboration as mine. I will broach the subject of our roles later in both this chapter, as well as in the next.

Some of the contents and processes in this chapter might be considered as antecedents or foundations for their collaboration, yet nevertheless were integral parts of their practice of collaboration. For example, my description below of Heather's vision for the upcoming school year and how she helped to set the tone for collaboration, could serve as part of the founding for this teacher collaboration and also be considered as part of her teacher identity in the previous chapter. However, I place them in this chapter, because without Heather's experience, vision and the way she helped to set the tone for working together, their fledgling collaboration might never have taken wing, or at least

floundered under the daily time constraints and pressures of teaching. Sharing her vision with Margret and Katerina was the start of this teacher collaboration.

Considering the following five parts together, this chapter attempts to strike a balance between a broad yet detailed view of Heather's, Margret's, and Katerina's teacher collaboration. Part A, "All in the trenches together," the initial phase of their teacher collaboration, continues the retrospective text of the previous chapter, while Part B, "The What, When, and How Much of Teacher Collaboration," and subsequent parts combine my interview data with observational, document, and artifact data. Part C continues with "Developing a Collaborative Relationship," while Part D is a description of "Working on Curriculum and Instruction." Part E concludes with "Supporting Teacher Collaboration."

Part A: "All in the trenches together"

How the three teachers initially practiced their collaboration began with getting together, two teachers at first, and two firsts – their first meetings together and the first week of school.

Getting Together

The teachers' first meeting as a group was delayed simply because of logistics. The teachers were either not in town or not involved in the same trainings over the summer. Margret had missed the four days of ITI training while on a family vacation. Katerina had been in Germany and missed the numeracy curriculum training, CGI. Heather recalled the effect of not having had mutual training experiences on their curriculum planning: "We had planned things separately in a way, and then we had to

bring that altogether when all three of us were together. Katerina didn't have a clue on CGI, but she knew what I was seeing through the ITI training, but Margret didn't because she wasn't there [at the ITI training]." From "all these little patchwork pieces that we'd worked on separately right before school," Heather pointed out, "we tried to hash it out so that we could hit the floor running when school started." Margret and she met in the K-1 room once before the ITI training and Katerina's return from Germany. Heather felt that both she and Margret were "very visual" and would benefit from being in the classroom in order to better picture themselves in it.

Heather and Katerina initially worked on outlining a curriculum that reflected the newly mandated Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS). They met during the last day of the ITI training (July 18th, 2002). Their two-hour meeting in the computer lab also included the two K-1 teachers from the original campus, namely Ms. Houston and me. During this initial curriculum meeting, the four of us worked together, developing an outline that covered a two-year K-1 cycle. As a new teacher to PCS, I mostly listened during the discussion, occasionally offering ideas, additions, or refinements to ideas, and Katerina presented similar offerings. Everyone remembered a great deal of excitement and enthusiasm in the room as we discussed and recorded mostly broad thematic curriculum ideas. These broad ideas were then "hashed out" in subsequent meetings, adding specific activities aimed at helping students to grasp broader themes.

Heather and Margret had also gotten together for the first time over the summer. Between sessions of their LN (literacy) training at a nearby town, Heather remembered Margret as being "immediately gung ho," and that: "We'd get together and hash out the

way we wanted things to be, mostly from a curriculum kind of basis," noting that Margret was "very curriculum oriented." Heather pointed out how Margret liked to include "particular things" and figure out: "How can I fit this in?" Heather also recalled that Margret would periodically say, in effect: "Sure, this'll work and this maybe not."

When the teachers first got together, Heather knew that she wanted to set a certain tone for working with Margret and Katerina. She was adamant about empowering her two new colleagues in the process of organizing the classroom, and didn't want to convey a tone of, as she put it: "Follow me and I will lead you." She told them about the problems of the year before, offering ways to avoid such problems, while also remaining open to their input: "I would share: this is what I did last year, and this is what I liked, and this is what I'm gonna try this year, but I don't know that that's the best way – I want to see what it's like." Heather wanted to make sure that she remained open to the other two teachers and their ideas for enacting the K-1 curriculum.

First Meetings Together

The day after the ITI training, July 19, 2002, the three teachers sat down together for the first time. Heather recalled the first joint meeting, how the three of them, "as soon as we could – as soon as we were all in town at the same time – we came up here." Margret and Katerina recalled Heather's vision and its source. Margret was just back from her vacation and the teachers had a three-day weekend in which to get ready for the first day of school. She recalled how Heather "had a vision and a direction of how to do it, and we [she and Katerina] just kind of said: 'Great.'" Margret figured that since Heather had been in the K-1 classroom the previous year, that Heather was in a good

position to have an "overall vision." She felt that Heather "had really thought and planned about how to set up different centers and do different things," which played a pivotal role in how they did "an overall kind of what-our-year-was-going-to-look-like." Margret reassured me that for her, Heather's vision "was really fine – it was good." Katerina remembered: "Heather wasn't happy about the situation last year where there were four people and they never did anything together, and I think she didn't really like that, so she gave the impulse to like: 'Let's do this together. We can plan this together.'"

One of their first decisions was who would teach where. Heather recalled that: "We talked about who was going to be in the loft (laughs), and it was kinda like Katerina and I will bang our heads if we're up there [laughing]. But I said: 'I'm willing to do that depending upon how you feel.' But Margret didn't have a problem with being up there." At their first group meeting, Heather outlined her vision in terms of how she thought the room should look, all within what she considered to be the new teaching context:

> We had to get together and kinda go: okay, LN, CGI, ITI,--this is what we know [laughing]. And this is what we should start, and this is how we might want to try it in this collaborative experience. So that was the gist of it, and it was very practical also in how we set up the room, and it was pretty much how I'd envisioned it. There were some changes, but it was basically the same.

During their first day of meeting, Heather presented to Margret and Katerina a list and a floor plan of her vision for learning centers, along with her rationale for each. Heather assumed Margret and Katerina would be in the same position she was in the first year, when she had difficulties applying a new, complex curriculum. She related to them that since she had just gone through her first year, that "it was still fresh" for her, and related that she "could be kind of very empathetic, and kinda guide like: "This is gonna

work – it's gonna take a while – this is gonna be fine. Have faith." She then proposed to them: "I would like to have all of these centers—what do you think?" Heather recalled their response: "They were like: 'yeah, let's do it!'" Her strategy was to operate within what she characterized as the "main constraints" for the new school year:

> We have 15 minutes and then specials start, then we do planning, then we've got to give the kids a break for their snack because they're gonna start moaning. Based on my experiences from last year, with this amount time it would be best to have math at this time [before lunch] so we have a big literacy block in the afternoon – so the MAIN constraints – it's kind of like carving: we can't do that, so take that away and whatever's left then you can hold more personally the way you want.

The first day of their three-day joint meetings before school, Margret proceeded with caution: "That first day you don't know. You have no idea how it's going to be and where it's going to go." She recognized that Heather and Katerina "already had a little bit of a thing going," and that it was important for her to "just sit down and kind of feel each other out." At this point, Margret felt it was appropriate to "just kind of sit back and watch and listen and break in wherever I could, but I was definitely more careful that first day."

From the beginning, Margret and Katerina were generally open to and supportive of Heather's vision for the classroom. Heather recalled that the floor plan and centers weren't just from her ideas. Margret, more so than Katerina, offered ideas and materials that added to Heather's vision. The block center presented a problem as it was ill-defined and located on tile flooring. Margret volunteered and resolved this issue by bringing in a five-by-eight-foot area carpet sporting various shapes and patterns. Margret recalled another instance when she attempted to add to Heather's vision. Margret's idea, borrowed

from a close teaching friend she greatly admired, was to institute a rainy-day tradition of having the kids make pancakes. However, both Heather and Katerina quickly assessed and argued against her idea. Margret remembered being initially caught off guard by this dismissal of her idea, but understood their reasoning – their kindergartners were still too impulsive and unaware of cooking dangers, especially of being burned by one false move. When it came time in her mind to let go of an idea, she wasn't sure how she did so, other than: "You just do."

In relation to projecting her ideas, Margret soon realized that in relation to creating ideas with Heather and Katerina, it was a definite give and take, as well as a learning experience: "One thing that I quickly realized is that when they nix an idea of mine, there's really a good reason behind it. Normally they're up for whatever, but if they ever nix it, then I really have to stop and think." Margret also recalled her stay at home with her children as a context for her appreciation of good ideas: "I've been at home for eight years, so I've been sort of queen of my castle for a long time, and I've been the boss. So it's been good to be working with people who really have good ideas." She learned to bond with others through a bonding process engendered in creating new ideas.

For Margret, bonding with Heather began through their discussions of curriculum: "We found a common bond when we started talking about what we were going to teach and our year and what it's going to look like and let's put these things together--that's such an exciting thing for me. I love working that part of it." Margret elaborated on what happened and what was discussed in their initial curriculum discussions:

> What's the curriculum, how are we going to mesh these things together and what are we going to do with this and what are we going to do with that and then you

> just start. This person comes up with these ideas and when you start talking about what you love and the fun of it, that's the fun--the creative putting-together of curriculum and how can we make this really meaningful, how can we make this really interesting.

Margret recalled how she and Heather "just really think along the same lines and that became apparent when we started flushing out the curriculum. She's going: 'yeah I did exactly that,' or 'oh yeah, we could do this' and 'it's just such a great idea.'" Margret said she knew that discussing curriculum ideas with Heather was "going to be great."

With Katerina, Margret recalled that "it was more like feeling her out," as opposed to the way it was with Heather. Margret also described Katerina as easy-going, though it took awhile longer for her to start bonding with Katerina: "She is so easy too, although she's about the whole GERMAN thing. The first five minutes I wasn't sure and then all of a sudden it's like she'd say something funny and we're laughing." Margret then described an "ice- breaker" for the three of them that first day: "It was the magenta books. She [Katerina] said, now what is that? The manure color? And she calls it manure instead of magenta, and so now we always say: 'Do you have any manure books?' And just in that minute, suddenly we all laughed together, then we were good."

The amount of time for making their initial decisions was structured in part by PCS. The school schedule allotted one day before the start of the school year for teacher preparation. The teachers decided quickly that they would also need to meet and work full days on both days of the weekend. Hence, during these first three days, at least two-thirds of their time fell into the volunteer category. They planned and organized a total of ten to twelve hours per day the first three days before school started. Their husbands wondered aloud about what sort of job they had and how long each of them were going to

be there each day. These meetings were the first such meetings since those of the previous spring when Heather had met with Katerina. According to Katerina, they spent the first couple of hours talking about what they wanted to do in the coming year, mostly in terms of curriculum. She said that: "Heather of course had already thought of everything. She had already planned how the day could look and had already done those little name clips and the rulers," and that Heather "definitely had notes of what she wanted to have." With Heather's notes as a discussion guide, Katerina explained:

> We kind of thought of what would we like to have, like we don't have enough time to color during the day, [and that the kids] love to color, so we thought an art center would be good, and that's how the whole thing came together, and we were throwing in ideas – how many centers we think we should have and how many are too little and too many, and that's how we figured it out."

After Heather explained her vision to Margret and Katerina, organizing the room, particularly the learning centers, became a major focus of their initial work together. The afternoon and evening before Margret returned from her family vacation, Heather and Katerina "moved a lot of furniture because the ITI training was in our space, so everything was really out of whack," according to Heather. She recalled:

> Katerina and I put the bookcases in this particular area, spread out the tables and chairs, and we made the center areas kind of, and then Margret came in [the next day] and just did some fine-tuning with the spaces. She said: "Well, I don't like this here, why don't we put it to here." She found a nice carpet for the blocs so we have that in the middle – things like that worked out really well.

Having had only a small dose of working together in her teacher training, Katerina was learning virtually from scratch how to practice teacher collaboration. She recalled that during the three days before school started they were engaged not so much in planning, but rather, "pretty much doing." As far as organizing learning centers and

her own teaching area, she said: “I had not a clue how to really set this up.” Katerina and Heather decided to put a set of bookcases in between their teaching areas so that, as Katerina explained: “I would have like kind of a closure to the room.” Often times, Katerina would ask for suggestions from Heather and Margret on a range of issues.

Heather described how they worked on the learning centers: “Largely we did it together, like us unpacking certain things, putting materials away – it was kind of unspoken, it was like if you had that box of pencils in front of you, you found a place to put the pencils.” She also recalled that “there was a lot of talking while we were doing it. We were all in the same area, like: ‘I've got these – how about we put these here?’ It was like: ‘Oh, that's a good idea,’ or, ‘I was thinking they maybe could go here.’” She confirmed that each of them would often do a verbal “check,” so that “everybody knew what you are doing, so you weren't surprising anybody.” Katerina recalled that her role in the learning centers was: “Pretty much listening to what the others had to say,” adding, “I mean I’m throwing in stuff too.” For the most part, listening a lot, adding ideas occasionally, and deferring to Heather’s and Margret’s experience during their discussions became an approach that Katerina took at first and one that she maintained during her first year at PCS.

Heather recounted some of the tasks that they talked about. Rather than talk that was explanatory, she said “it was more practical, like: ‘OK, what around here can we put the crayons in?’ [laughing]; like using the resources wisely.” They had blocs and puppets that were purchased the year before for the room, but “didn’t have professional teacher

kinds of things," Heather noted. Describing where to put things for their learning centers, Heather professed:

> It was basically putting everything in a logical place where it'd be safe and easy to get to. I think it was Margret and I mostly putting that extra time in when we were able to, just saying: "I think this should go here, the puppets should go where they can get 'em."

Heather related how they prepared for a "meet-the-teacher" evening four days before the first day of class: "We were really under pressure to have things as nice as we could get them because the parents and the kids were all coming in before school – looking at the room, trying to get their kids excited." Writing to the parents of all three classes on behalf of the three teachers, she explained that: "In the announcements I had asked that they bring school supplies. So we were setting up when all the parents came with the supplies, and then afterward we had to put all the supplies away."

Prior to the first day of school the teachers continued to struggle with issues of time and space. The teachers felt that they had to move fast in order to prepare adequately for the imminent arrival of the children. "It was like a blur," Heather remembered. Even though the room looked spacious at first glance, Heather asserted that: "Space was a big problem." She described some of the logistical demands on their space:

> There are three or four little cabinets above the sink, otherwise everything's wide open. So we have 45 kids bringing a year's worth of everything – paper towels, Kleenex boxes, and papers up the wazoo, and where do you put 'em? And before the kids got here, I was saying: "That's gonna be a problem."

After the parents brought supplies for all three classes, Heather recalled how: "We just put a little bit here, a little bit there," not worrying about which materials belonged to

each class. One storage place turned out to be off limits in the view of the administration (for safety reasons). Heather explained this incident:

> It was kind of funny because up in Margret's loft there's this "cloud," what they call a suspended ceiling, and we had no place to put all these tissues, and they're in big piles in these weird little boxes, so we put all this stuff up there and got busted for it later. We had to take it all down. It was perfect – we didn't put anything heavy up there, but it was very funny."

During the teacher's first three days together, one question in particular marked its first appearance in their joint discussions. Heather recalled using and hearing this question several times: "What do you think?" This question was periodically heard from all three teachers during these first three days and was used almost daily by the teachers during the course of my observations. According to Heather, this question was used initially by her in the first meeting with Margret and Katerina in order to help set a "tone" for how she wanted to work with her new colleagues. Each teacher agreed that this was a tone in which everyone felt empowered to make decisions about the form, function, and direction of the classroom curriculum.

The teachers' first meetings together seem important in several ways. In hindsight, these first encounters initiated processes that later on became patterns. This was true, for example, in how they typically asked questions of each other to initiate a topic or to find out what the other two teachers were thinking. These meetings also reaffirmed the "tone" for working together that was initiated when they first got together, a tone which they carried into the first week of school.

First Week of School

Heather described the first day of school as one where there was "just a general flow of how the kid's day went and imagining the kids in that experience and thinking that it is better than what I saw last year – from the kids' point of view." She thought the kids' day was better: "Because we treated the day and all our bodies in it as a whole entity, rather than a fragment." I asked Heather if she experienced a "sigh of relief" as the first school day came to a close. She reflected that it wasn't a sigh of relief, but rather "an appreciation," adding that: "There's not a whole lot of time for sighing 'cause there's so much to be done [laughing], so many things we still had to work on—just an appreciation more than anything else."

According to Heather, fruitful results of collaboration came quickly. Referring to their collaboration, I asked Heather if there was a point at which she said: "Wow, this is it." Her immediate reply was: "The first day after school and seeing how it was so different from last year, and the possibilities that were there and the things that we were able to avoid by working together. It was so clear. And that it was largely successful." Comparing this first day to the first day of her first year at PCS, Heather reflected: "It was a whole lot better – knowing we were on the right track." Margret described the first day as one where: "We were immediately in the trenches together," and that "the beauty of it was that we're all in it together – all experiencing the same things." She also wondered about and was a bit in awe of their initial experience together: "How often do you really have the exact same experience . . . not that we had the exact same experience, but how often are you that closely tied?"

Their collaborative endeavors over the previous three days, totaling about thirty-three hours, helped to develop what Heather described as "an understanding of how the [first] day would be." Part of this understanding was "to make everything go smoothly." Heather gave examples of what made things go smoothly, like rotating lunchtime supervision of all their students between the three of them, or: "If somebody was having a problem you'd jump in and you'd help 'em." She contrasted this state of affairs with last year when there wasn't someone jumping in to help, when "you did everything yourself." Heather remembered instances when one of them jumped in to help: "Sometimes if there was [another teacher's] kid who had a problem, you were there to help." Another example was bringing all the kids in from recess. Heather explained how they helped out each other in this instance:

> There are the kids that don't want to – somebody's gotta be in the front (laughs). It just helps to have somebody in the front getting everybody, their drinks of water, making sure that everything on the inside is okay. There's a kid on the outside wrestling and there's somebody there, and there's somebody in the middle solving the problems that happen in between (laughs). It just works out so nicely!

I asked Heather how this instance was worked out beforehand, and if there was one of them who directed the student supervision, and she said no, that "we all worked on that together, like sharing." She recalled that: "Part of it was procedural: 'You be on the inside and watch all the kids here, and I'll have outside duty.'" In regard to supervising lunch or recess, she recalled thinking that "there's no real reason why all three of us need to be in the lunch room at the same time, or watchin' the kids [during recess]."

While they planned some procedures for when their three classes were together, there were numerous times when helping another teacher was unplanned. Heather

remembered that "there were all these moments in between that we didn't plan, like: 'okay, when you line up, you're gonna be in the front, you're gonna be' – it's just whoever's there." Unplanned help was a matter of each teacher keeping an eye out for what the forty-five children were doing and where the other two teachers were positioned, and then deciding to take the initiative and act on an "as needed" basis. Heather described how events were unpredictable, like, "who's gonna fall down and scrape their knee, and where's your body gonna be when that happens. You just kinda help each other." When the occasional injury happened on the playground, regardless of whose student, the teacher who was in the closest proximity assisted that student, then the teacher who knew the child a little better would take over. Heather stated that such help "just developed," each teacher using "some common sense and some courtesy." Each teacher, they agreed, should feel free to work with another teacher's student, even if that student was in close proximity to his/her teacher.

The first week of school wasn't easy for the teachers. For Margret, there were both positives and some unsettling unknowns: "All of a sudden, I was dealing with a grade level that I didn't know at all, although I did because of my kids. I wasn't completely sure of myself." She added that "I probably would have been more nervous if I'd been off in a classroom by myself." Margret on the other hand was pleased that teamwork happened quickly. The teachers decided to apportion specific responsibilities as the children arrived at the classroom. "My first job," Margret recalled, "was simply to stand at the door: 'Good morning, how are you? Welcome to the classroom. I'm Ms. Miller,' and that's all I had to do." She then sent them into the classroom where Katerina

would figure out the children's lunch orders, and Heather would sing with all the kids, and "then we would all move over and all sing together," Margret recalled. "So from the first we were already sharing the load and as it turned out," she reflected, "it didn't work out very well at all because it was really kind of crazy and nobody got their lunch menu right and the cafeteria ladies got upset." This first week and for a couple of months afterward, Margret and Katerina were thankful to have Heather come up with the CGI math problem each day since they hadn't been to that training. "Without her [Heather] I would have been totally at a loss," Katerina said.

Something that Heather wanted to incorporate into the daily routine of the classroom was gathering all three classes into one big group for team teaching at three different times during the day. However, a lack of clear procedures or routines, the difficulty of making multiple transitions with their classes, and the individualized teaching approach that was emphasized by LN and CGI, prompted the teachers to change their plans by the end of the first week. Margret likewise remembered that the teachers wanted to exercise plans for several joint and coordinated class activities during the day: "We had plans when we first started. Heather really had an idea about how she wanted to do it, which was great, and we just went along with it." Science, social studies, math, literacy, Lifeskills, and recess were the times they planned to have either a rotation system or a single large group activity. They soon decided, however, to change these plans. According to Margret, after conducting four large group classes together, the teachers "just could not see how that was all going to work, so we split off to our different classrooms and actually really liked it and stayed that way." They soon reduced

the number of times they joined and coordinated daily class activities, from six to twice daily, namely for their recess periods and to teach their "Big Group" at mid-day.

Section Summary

In Part A we see the teachers expressing their willingness to collaborate in their actions, whether in their first times together during summer trainings, in their first meetings, or during the first week of school. Heather had chosen Margret and Katerina, in chief, because of their willingness to work together in a multi-class environment. These two new teachers demonstrated and lived up to their verbal commitment through their willingness to volunteer long days in preparation for the students' arrival, and extended days after school during that first week and beyond. Yet more important than their time commitment, all three teachers expressed their willingness to collaborate through their enthusiasm, focus, and willingness to look for ways to help and then follow through with help in a timely way.

Also, working in the same classroom may have helped the teachers to increase rapidly their degree of empathy and understanding of one another. This stemmed from not only from their times of working closely together, but also because: "We're all doing the same thing. We're all sharing the same experience so that . . . you understand each other so much more and what the other person's going through that it did not take that much time at all," said Margret.

Besides cementing the tone of their collaborative working relationship, the teachers again demonstrated dexterity and flexibility in how they adapted their collaborative efforts during the first week of school. They quickly reduced the number of

times they taught jointly, which allowed them to reduce somewhat the amount of time they needed to work together on joint curriculum, which was already pushing their first days together past ten hour a day.

As with most teachers, the amount and manner in which they spent their time was of vital concern to how they went about meeting the demands of teaching, not only autonomously, but, in their case, collaboratively as well. Hence, I committed to examine not only what the teachers focused on together, but also when and, of most importance to them, how much time they spent in activities related to their collaboration.

Part B: The What, When, and How Much of Teacher Collaboration

Before the teachers worked out all the processes for how to conduct their teacher collaboration, they made choices about the areas of curriculum and instruction upon which to focus their efforts, hinted at in Part A. They also decided to retain joint planning and exercise of the weekly field trip, the learning centers, and thematic activities for science and social studies, the planning of each nine-week bloc, as well as the rotation of lunchtime and recess supervision from one teacher to the next. After identifying these content areas, I will examine when and how much time the teachers spent in the basic tasks that represented their collaboration, including variations of how they spent time together.

Content Areas

My aim in this section, from the vantage point of the teachers' retrospective, is to briefly describe what they worked on together. And, as the next section shows, working together also included times when a teacher worked individually on tasks that served all

three teachers. After reducing their joint instructional time and content (elaborated upon in the next section), the teachers decided to focus on several different content areas that came to be routine in their practice. It was clear that they were under tremendous time pressure, as most teachers are, so they quickly developed the habit of prioritizing and focusing on what they needed to complete and start immediately. The question they generally asked was: "What do we need to work on now?" They had already worked on the physical layout of the classroom, including the joint learning centers, and the short and long-term planning of the basic curriculum (ITI, including LifeSkills, LN, and CGI). ITI, or the training and written materials of Integrated Thematic Instruction, was used by the teachers to help guide their work together on the major curriculum areas, including science and social studies. ITI dictated that the teachers decide upon an overall theme for each 9-week bloc, and plan daily and weekly activities meant to convey the overall theme in smaller ways. As Margret put it, ITI "runs everything."

Because ITI, LN, and CGI were already spelled out for the teachers, most of their daily work together was devoted to field trips, science, and social studies projects that would fit with their current theme. "Having everything be consistent with our theme each week is our biggest challenge," Margret said. Specifically, the three of them directed most of their work to confirming and organizing joint field trips and, in particular, doing a mid-day joint presentation, "Big Group," which became their sole routine instructional time when all three classes sat together on the floor for the teachers' improvisational presentation. While they typically planned their Thursday field trip at numerous junctures (which typically included a major planning meeting on Wednesday), they also worked

together once or twice during the week on the Friday parent letter. Each week they alternated the teacher responsible for the letter's final composition, keyboarding, and copying. They also worked less regularly on a variety of areas (roughly prioritized by the order of time spent, from most to least), beginning with pedagogy (including behavior management), followed by before bloc planning, learning centers, classroom procedures, organization of materials and supplies, end of bloc special events, the tri-annual parent/child conference, classroom layout, their daily schedule, interactions with the administration or school committees, with thank you letters and gifts as the last. These areas were *what* the teachers on worked together. In Part D, "Working on Curriculum and Instruction," I portray, via their perspective and my participant-observations, *how* the teachers worked together.

Having described the overall content of their teacher collaboration, I turn now to a more precise description of when the teachers spent time in relation to their collaboration, as well as how much. Knowing when teacher collaboration occurred, its proportion in relation to the available time for collaborative activities and their typical school day, and the amount of time devoted to the major categories of collaborative activity, provides a way to help the reader better envision and understand the practice of this teacher collaboration.

Time & Teacher Collaboration

By choosing to represent how much time the teachers used for collaboration, I heeded the exhortation of Wolcott (1994) to collect at least some "systematic data" (1994, p. 30). Doing so gave me a different angle into generating teacher collaboration

data, and different insights into how these teachers decided to structure their available time. In addition, focusing on their use of time enabled me to help define the parameters of teacher collaboration. I used a bloc of sixty-second increments over a two week period, coding the predominant activity within each increment. I then placed the codes into one of six categories, defined below (one of which was non-collaborative time).

In order to facilitate this time and activity focus, I developed a rubric for what did and did not count as teacher collaboration. I used my initial definition and eventual categorization of teacher collaboration as tools for choosing instances that did or did not count as teacher collaboration. An important part of my definition was the goal of teacher collaboration: organizing and delivering better curriculum and instruction than could otherwise be accomplished alone. What didn't count were those times when the teachers prepared for and taught their individual classes. This bloc of time was typically more than half of each day. Other times that were not counted consisted of when a teacher performed or thought about things that served them individually, for example: picking up her mail, working on her class area, working alone on lesson plans and activities for her class, and talking with other members of the PCS community about things that didn't concern the other two teacher or their classes in the K-1 room. Partaking in teacher collaboration included, for example: a K-1 teacher talking with another member of the PCS community about things that might make for better curriculum or instruction for all three teachers, working together on a field trip, a parent letter, lesson plans and activities for either individual classes or all three classes, helping another K-1 teacher with her students or class area, or picking up another K-1 teacher's mail.

Below I offer a description, compiled mostly from fieldnotes, of both the time blocs available for collaboration verses the blocs of time they actually used for collaboration. I present the teachers' use of time in terms of averages and percentages, as well as an idea of their variations.

When and How Much Time?

My goal here is to represent accurately the time spent in each category of teacher collaboration. However, there were times when I made decisions to round up or down to a whole minute or to the closest five minutes for longer periods (like the amount of time at school). I did so in part because it was difficult to ascertain at all times when a given activity or period began and ended. In an attempt to account for both typical and atypical times during the school year, as well as typical and atypical times during a two week period, I collected numbers for their actual time spent in and out of collaboration at two junctures in 2003: in April toward the last part of the 2002-2003 school year, and in November of the 2003-2004 school year. After having determined five broad categories for teacher collaboration, I collected time and activity data during these two time periods, represented below.

I broke down the time they spent in teacher collaboration into five major categories: (1) those times spent in building "familial collegiality," (2) those times when they were "hashing it out," (3) doing other tasks together, (4) conducting "Big Group," and (5) doing tasks separately. I also added a sixth category, "non-collaboration time," in order to make comparisons between collaboration and non-collaboration time. "Familial collegiality" included those times when the teachers were creating and maintaining group

identity (e.g., sharing stories, joking, teasing, laughing) or being supportive (e.g., being mindful of others' needs, following through on tasks in a timely way, being congenial, acting as each other's memory aide). "Hashing it out" included those times when the teachers were brainstorming and planning together, figuring out logistics for implementing ideas, and assigning tasks related to curriculum and instruction. Such tasks usually involved working on the "thematic stuff" that ITI emphasized, and involved infusing specific themes throughout a 9-week block, whether for science, social studies, literacy, numeracy, learning centers, Lifeskills, or field trips. "We definitely spend most of our time collaborating on thematic stuff," Margret pointed out. "Doing other tasks together" included times when, for example, they reorganized their mutual learning centers or cabinet supplies, or when they were conducting a field trip. Such "doing" was when the teachers implemented something together, and was thereby distinguished from planning types of activity. Conducting "Big Group" was mostly a collaborative improvisation as the teachers presented a daily Lifeskills part of their curriculum at mid-day. While it could be a part of doing tasks together, doing "Big Group" was a central, daily, defining type of joint activity, so I wanted to account for it separately in order to help describe and analyze their collaboration more appropriately. "Doing tasks separately" represented mostly division of labor activities when a teacher would work on tasks individually from which all three teachers benefited, like copying, writing the weekly parent letter, planning a field trip, or following through on other tasks, whether specifically assigned or not.

During their typical ten-hour day the first year and at the beginning of the second year, the teachers had opportunities available for collaboration, whether during the school-mandated planning period or at times which were self-initiated. In April and July these daily opportunities averaged 4.4 hours per day: twenty minutes before their students started arriving, usually about two hours after school (self-initiated), and just under two hours during the school day (which included an eighty-minute school-mandated planning period, fifteen to thirty minutes for their "Big Group" presentation, and ten to fifteen minutes during lunch). Their eighty-minute planning period was switched from the morning to the end of their instruction day at the beginning of the 2003-2004 school year. Thursdays included additional opportunities for teacher collaboration during the weekly field trip of usually two to three hours. Friday afternoons, after the half day of school and before the weekly staff meeting, the three teachers would often go out for lunch, discussing various class and school topics. In November of their second year such daily opportunities decreased to 3.4 hours per day because the teachers averaged about an hour less per day after school.

However, the teachers didn't necessarily use each possible period of time for collaboration. They weren't required to use an entire given period of time for collaboration, even during their daily joint planning period. For example, they almost never worked together during the twenty minutes before school, choosing instead to prepare for the coming day in their respective class areas. Meetings during lunch were somewhat haphazard, and involved only two of the teachers (the "on" teacher supervised all three classes during lunch/recess). And they didn't stick with the school-mandated

quitting time, 3:45 pm, only occasionally parting at 3:45 or 4 pm, mostly for medical/family reasons. Most of the time after school, they worked together on and off until five or six o'clock. As Heather asserted: "We are all willing to put in a lot of overtime hashing things out." They decided at the beginning of the 2003-2004 school year to go home by 4:30 regardless of what "needed" to be finished, though this rarely happened. The teachers spent most of their time in collaboration during their two largest blocs of time: the eighty-minute planning period (averaging 50 minutes per day) and after school for about an hour of their typical two hour stay, averaging two hours and ten minutes per day (which includes an average of twenty minutes of conducting "Big Group"). The other two hours or so of available time were spent on their individual class preparations and various school responsibilities. Thus, their joint planning periods, after school, and during the intersession breaks, were the largest blocs of time available for collaboration.

Table1 below summarizes how Heather, Margret, and Katerina used their time for these categories in relation to teacher collaboration. The average percentage (which included both time periods, July and November) of actual teacher collaboration time during the first half of their second year together, is expressed as the average actual time of collaboration (130 min/day) divided by the average available time for collaboration (232 min/day), was an average of 56%, or just over half of the available time for teacher collaboration. The average percentage of actual teacher collaboration time verses the average length of the actual teachers' day (7:30 am to 5:00 pm, or 9.5 hours) was 22.9%, or just over one-fifth of their average day spent in collaboration. Breaking it down by

Table 1.

Average Time Spent Daily[1] in Teacher Collaboration & as a Percentage of Collaboration.

Categories	Average Daily Time by Amount & Percentage	Percentage of Collaboration
1. Familial Collegiality	22 min/day	3.9%	16.9%
2. "Hashing it Out"[2]	30 min/day	5.3%	23.1%
3. Doing Tasks Together[3]	47 min/day	8.2%	36.1%
4. Conducting "Big Group"[4]	20 min/day	3.5%	15.4%
5. Doing Tasks Separately	11 min /day	1.9%	8.5%
Actual Collaboration Time	130 min//day	22.8% of average day 56.0% of avail. collab. time	
Available Collaboration Time[5]	232 min/day	41.1% of average day
Within Contract[6]	157 min/day	27.5%
Volunteer Time[7]	75 min/day	13.2%
Non-Collaboration Time	5.6 hrs/day	58.9% of average day

[1] Based on the teachers' average 9.5 hour day.

[2] Generating and Implementing Ideas.

[3] Mostly doing field trips (3.2 hrs/wk, mostly on the trip itself) and learning centers (36 min/wk

[4] Teacher Improvisational Performance

[5] Each teacher spent much of this time in autonomous activities for her own class.

[6] Their contractual time was from 7:30 am to 3:45 pm.

[7] Here, volunteer time included their average stay after school, 3:45-5:00 pm.

category, of their actual average teacher collaboration time (2.17 hrs/day or 10.85 hrs/wk), the teachers spent (all figures are averages) 16.9% (22 minutes/day or 1.84 hrs/wk) of their time in activities that built or maintained familial collegiality, and 23.1% (30 minutes/day or 2.5 hrs/wk) of their time "hashing it out." Doing tasks together represented an average of 36.1% (47 minutes/day or 3.9 hrs/wk), and another 15.4% (20 minutes/day or 1.67 hrs/wk) of their time was spent conducting "Big Group," while 8.5% (11 minutes/day or almost 1 hr/wk) of their time was spent doing tasks separately in service of collaboration ends. Because "Big Group" could also be considered as part of "doing things together," I extracted averages from "doing things together" for its other two major joint activities: Thursday fieldtrips, 3.2 hrs/wk (192 min/wk, or 38.4 min/day); and learning centers, 36 min/wk, or 7.2 min/day (though time spent on learning centers was more heavily concentrated in their set-up at the beginning of each bloc). Expressed as average percentages, field trips represented 29.5% and learning centers just under 6% of their actual time in teacher collaboration.

The time each teacher engaged in collaboration provided an enlightening view in terms of task verses relationship orientation (with some overlap). "Hashing it out," doing tasks together, doing tasks separately, and conducting "Big Group" was one way to group the categories of their collaboration in order to represent task orientation. These four categories, or task orientation, comprised 83% (108 minutes/day or 9 hrs/wk) of their actual teacher collaboration time. The other 17% (22 minutes/day or 1.84 hrs/wk) could be considered as more relationship oriented, namely, building and maintaining "familial

collegiality." Thus, the teachers apportioned their time between collaborative tasks and relational activities in a ratio of five-to-one, respectively.

Variations

Rather than relying on one set of averages for viewing their collaboration, I also assembled numbers that reflect changes in how the teachers used their time over the course of a year-long study, which provides an idea of how their collaboration evolved over the course of the study. In order to show this, I assumed from their recollections and opinions, and from my memory as a colleague of theirs, that the greatest amount of collaboration time was invested when they first worked together before school started and during the first half of the 2002-2003 school year.

Below I present the averages of their actual collaboration time verses the available time for collaboration, which I collected in February and October of 2003. By February, the teachers were over six months into their collaboration, while the October averages represent time spent in collaboration after fifteen months of working together. However, the time study from February differs somewhat from that of time data collected in October. My view of what counted as teacher collaboration was not as clear in February as it later became in October. If anything, I over-counted their February time in collaborative pursuits, though I have no way of confirming this assumption. With this in mind, the average amount of time spent in collaboration in February was 177 minutes per day, or 68% of the available time (264 minutes) for collaboration (177 / 264). In the first half of their second year, the teachers spent an average of one hour less per day at school because they averaged a 4:30 instead of a 5:30 pm quitting time (so their available time

for teacher collaboration decreased sixty minutes, from 4.4 to 3.4 hours per day). Thus, in October they averaged 82 minutes per day in teacher collaboration, or 40.2% of the available time (204 minutes) for collaboration (82 / 204). In comparison, the teachers averaged 95 fewer minutes per day of working together, thus averaging 54.2% less time in collaboration in October than in February.

According to all three teachers, they felt like they spent an extraordinary amount of time collaborating when they first started working together during their first year, the 2002-2003 school year. Heather conveyed a sense of how collaboration was always at hand: "There's not a time when we're not talking about it," though, she admitted later, this statement was a bit of hyperbole. Regardless, their extensive efforts seemed warranted in order to sufficiently organize and present the room in ways that suited their ideas and satisfied parents and administrators. They directed much of their effort toward structuring and fine-tuning seven learning centers, as well as the overall curriculum structure for the two-year K-1 cycle. After their first five months (mid-July to mid-December of 2002) of greater than average time spent together in collaboration, the teachers felt like they settled into a more regular schedule of working together.

The daily amount of time spent collaborating often varied. Some of this variation resulted from the teachers' configuration of the weekly classroom schedule and the school calendar. Because they scheduled a joint field trip every Thursday, Wednesday after school they would meet longer than usual, generating ideas and making decisions about appropriate field trip activities. Thursday was a unique and especially lengthy time of working together during the week, averaging over three hours for each field trip. They

scheduled special joint activities, like the "Invention Convention" or "Around the World" that required more collaboration time. PCS also scheduled teacher responsibilities, like three parent-child conferences per year, where the teachers took the time to jointly plan and implement a division of labor that reduced their time spent in producing and using the paperwork templates for the conferences.

The time of year also played a role in how much time the teachers spent collaborating. During the last week of each of the four school intersessions, usually for one to two days, they convened in the empty classroom. These intersession meetings often lasted two to three days, each day generally at least half-a-day long. The first week of each nine-week block was also marked by more than the average amount of collaboration time, as the teachers solidified, confirmed, implemented, and extended their plans from the intersession meetings. In the middle of each bloc, they planned special activities together and invited the parents to attend, or more often, to participate in planning and conducting these activities. Either way, the teachers spent more than the average amount of time in collaborative pursuits in the middle of each bloc and before each nine-week session. Thus, the second and third weeks of each session, those weeks during which I collected time and activity data, were more typical of their average time spent in collaboration.

Section Summary

The specific content areas upon which the teachers focused and the amount of time they spent collaboratively were of great concern to them. They quickly winnowed down their major foci to working together on the content areas of field trips, learning

centers, science and social studies, “Big Group,” the weekly Friday parent letter, and culminating events at the end of each bloc. As far as categorizing their time, the teachers were working collaboratively in one of five major ways: (1) developing and sustaining “familial collegiality,” (2) generating and planning ideas, or “hashing it out,” (3) doing tasks together, (4) doing tasks separately in behalf of collaborative goals, and (5) conducting “Big Group,” their mid-day teacher improvisational presentation. Except for Big Group,” the teachers did most of their collaborative work during their eighty-minute joint planning period and after school. I viewed the way they spent time in their collaboration as falling into two types of orientations. During collaboration the teachers were, broadly speaking (and with some overlap), engaged in either a task or a relational orientation, and they did so in a ratio of five to one (task to relational oriented activity), where I considered familial collegiality as relational, and the other four categories as task oriented.

As far as the relationship between individual categories, the teachers spent the most time from week to week doing tasks together (36.1% of their actual collaboration time on average), most of which was focused on planning and implementing their weekly field trip (29.5%). The second category where they spent the most time was in generating and planning ideas, or 23.1% of their actual collaboration time, followed by familial collegiality (16.9%), improvising during “Big Group” (15.4%), and doing tasks separately in behalf of their collaboration (8.5%). The teachers apportioned their actual collaboration time between collaborative tasks (doing tasks together, planning ideas, “Big Group,” and doing tasks separately) and relational activities (familial collegiality) in a

ratio of five-to-one. The teachers also varied their weekly time by spending large amounts of time before each bloc planning the upcoming nine weeks and redesigning their learning centers, and planning in the middle of a bloc, often with parents, their culminating student project for each bloc. While how they spent time was an ever-present concern among the teachers, they also focused a great deal of energy into how they related to one another.

Part C: Developing a Collaborative Relationship

Having met for three days before school, working over thirty hours, and having experienced a successful first week, the teachers quickly went about developing relationships that would permit them to collaborate throughout the course of the school year. When it came to describing their relationships, the teachers didn't believe in distinguishing between the personal and the professional. Developing relationships arose, in part, they asserted, through their similar teaching styles. Margret recalled that Heather and she had similar teaching styles, and that this similarity helped them to "get into that whole relationship thing," which she felt was paramount: "How you deal with relationships is just everything."

Getting Comfortable

During the first couple of weeks, the three teachers spent 10 to 12 hours a day in the same classroom including some weekend days. After a couple of months the teachers had formed a close relationship, feeling quite comfortable around each other. Such comfort was due in part to the sheer amount of time spent together: "I spend more time with them than I spend with anybody [including]my whole family," Margret said.. The

weekend before Thanksgiving they went to Atlanta together for a literacy conference and according to Margret "there was just like no qualms at all about sharing a hotel room." She remembered feeling "as comfortable with them as I am with any of my best friends or my husband . . . so in a very short period of time, they're like your right hand." Part of the reason for being able to get comfortable with each other quickly, Margret reasoned, was that:

> We had a purpose and we had a classroom to set up and we had things to do and you just don't have time to sit around and so we immediately jumped into something we all love, which is teaching and curriculum and putting all this stuff together and setting up the environment.

Regarding such activities, Margret thought that: "All this is fun. It's the fun part. So we got to do really, really fun things."

Part of what fostered a sense of feeling comfortable about each other was their penchant for talking with one another. As Margret related, they did a great deal of "sitting around and talking and debriefing." They were quite interested in all the events, large and small, that transpired daily in their classroom, as well as events outside the classroom. Typically, as Margret summarized for them, one of the trio would exclaim in a conversation: "Oh my gosh, did you hear about that?" The teachers would then sit, usually after school, and share several stories about their respective days. They agreed that developing such a conversational habit helped them become comfortable quickly with each other.

Caring

It didn't take the teachers long to figure out that they would care for each other. In the beginning, because they were operating under considerable stress to prepare the

classroom almost from scratch, do their lesson plans, and make a favorable first impression on their parents and the administration, Margret described how they responded with acts of caring. Margret felt that she'd been "thrown" into a difficult situation, likening their beginning to preparation for battle: "You can't get more in the trenches," she remarked. It soon became obvious to everyone that "everybody cares about the other person," Margret asserted, recalling an example of how she cared for Katerina:

> I found myself cleaning up Katerina's space because I knew she was going to be gone for three days, so I was like throwing some things away and trying to…you know? Which I mean it's not like you don't have enough of your own, you just care enough about people that you want the best for them.

Conversely, when Katerina saw a need, she volunteered several times to do an after school dismissal duty for Margret.

Margret felt almost right away that her fellow teachers were caring people. "When a caring person like Heather—you know when somebody actually really cares and you start to realize that these people [Heather and Katerina] really care. They really support me." Such a sense of feeling cared for led Margret to characterize their relationship as one of friends: "So that first few weeks, and by the time we actually were able to get our heads above water, there we were with these great new friends who really cared about us because we'd already been through so much." By January, such friends had become like family. Heather invited Margret and her son and daughter to her daughter's birthday party, and as they were leaving Margret thanked Heather for including them, whereupon Heather replied: "Oh, you're family now." Margret recalled: "I totally felt that way too. We are family." They also arranged a couple of family get togethers at each others house to simply have fun together.

Margret described how caring worked as a function of their complementary experiences and abilities:

> I do think our experiences are the same and yet so different that we all bring so many different things to it, and we complement each other very well, so if I needed help with something, there was somebody right there to help and if somebody else needed help, I was right there to say: "Oh, well I tried this with my kids."

While, as in Margret's example above, close proximity enabled the teachers to demonstrate their caring for one another more readily, such caring was marked by both a mindset of "looking to help," and a deep emotional commitment to each other, similar to those of well-bonded, deeply caring family members.

Sharing Power

Issues of power and control were considered by all three teachers. All three insisted that they didn't sense or know of any problems as far as power and control were concerned. As the Teacher Leader for the K-1 classroom, Heather saw her role as helping Margret and Katerina, "so that they're not struggling like I did, but at the same time not wanting to seem like the leader so that there's that: 'I'm above you' kind of thing." Heather knew that she could "abuse the power to some degree, 'cause I have the title of 'Leader,' and I've been here before, and I have more years of experience." Because of her "philosophy of the bigger picture," Heather asserted that she didn't abuse her power or overly concern herself with power: "I just don't do that. I don't go there [laughing]. I feel like I could, but I don't believe that's the best thing to do," adding, "I like it better when it's not like that." She thought that Margret and Katerina felt the same way about

power and control, and that they looked to her to "set the tone" for how power would be enacted as they worked together.

Somehow the teachers had to go about making decisions. Heather's thought was to carefully choose what to say, as well as what not to say. For example, Heather often wanted to project her ideas about how Margret and Katerina could go about teaching aspects of the literacy and math curricula that were new to them, but she didn't, "'cause I knew they would find it in their own time." At times, Heather also wondered: "Oooo, maybe I should've said more." Many times her tactic was to "just offer a question when I really have an outcome that I want to get to," but she wouldn't say: "This is what I want." Instead, she would ask: "What do you think about this?" She likened it to teaching the math curriculum, CGI, where "it's kinda like you know the answer, but you ask the question anyway," and enable them to create their own knowledge, or "take ownership." She believed that such tactics helped her to share power with Margret and Katerina.

For Heather, the sharing of power was a way to generate ideas for their joint tasks. She would ask for their thoughts in order to open their discussions to other alternatives and to see something differently. The result, she said, was that "sometimes they'll have an answer that I like better than what I even pictured." She emphasized that: "If I put it across as: 'This is what I want and this is how we can get there,' I would never see those things that are even better than what I originally saw. So it's kinda knowing that that's possible and trusting that."

Yet, there were still examples of when Katerina (more so than either Heather or Margret) was removed from decision-making and ignored. At times Heather and Margret would respond to each other, but not to Katerina as in this example below:

H: I have a few tubs just for these folders.
K: I was gonna say, (gets cut off)
H: Like put the folders (gets cut off)
M: And for all those books – that's what we kinda thought about, putting those books in there.
H: It won't take much to fill 'em.

For the most part, however, power seemed to have a type of harmonious balance among the teachers. They were happy with the results of their decisions, and didn't typically ascribe ownership of an idea to a particular teacher. To them, individual ideas seemed to merge seamlessly into a group idea. It became a standing joke for me to ask them: "Whose idea was that?" They would pause a moment, shrug their shoulders, and one would reply: "Don't know," followed by smiles and laughter. While the issue of power was not openly debated or of undue concern to the teachers, they nevertheless exercised it in the course of their decision-making. Katerina, her suggestions often ignored during their discussions, remained content. She minded very little such moments, focusing instead on the final idea and its implementation as a more than adequate source of satisfaction. The teachers also seemed to handle their respective egos in a way that helped their decision-making process and implementation of ideas to proceed smoothly.

Ego

From the beginning, Margret felt that it was important to "get beyond" ego in their relationships, asserting: "I don't think we're all that hung up on our own selves,

because you can't be. Everything's about what we're doing and our kids and keeping our sanity." Margret described a time when it was difficult to decide whether to let go or hang onto her idea:

> There have been a couple of times where I've just really felt strongly about something and they're like: "No, no," and I'm just like: "Man, I just," and you just got to suck it up and go on. You just can't like get too—I wish I could think of an example because it hasn't happened often. Heather says things like I wanted a map—we were doing mapping when we were going on our field trips, and we would make these books and take them along with us sometimes. Little things like a map of the firehouse. We were going to the firehouse and there was a field trip that Katerina had set up and we were putting together a book, some different activities for them to do, and our very first field trip had been to my house and they had followed a map around to find all the things. And so from there, they [the students] were using their mapping skills in all these different situations, and I had said I wanted to get a map at a firehouse and somehow it hadn't been acted on, and they were like, "Let's just blow it off," and I couldn't. I just couldn't let it go. And I'm the one who couldn't, who doesn't let things get away, so I ended up calling someone [at the firehouse] and it turned out to be great. She drew this beautiful map of the firehouse, so sometimes it works out and sometimes I should let it go. I'm probably one who has the hardest time letting things go sometimes because I just feel like it has to be—everything has to be connected.

All the teachers agreed that sometimes, though not often, it was a struggle to deal with one's ego during those occasions when an idea was ignored, deferred, or wasn't acted upon by either of the other two teachers. For the most part, as they and the administration confirmed, their egos seemed to be "in check," and not easily ruffled in any way that I could discern in my course of fieldwork.

Creating Spaces

Reflecting about her relationship with Margret and Katerina, Heather said: "I think what's important about this collaboration is that there are spaces." For Heather, it was important to be able to return to their respective classrooms as a way of having space where: "You're not aware of the other people – not really having to work with them or be

with them." Such "space" shifted throughout the day, traversing from an autonomous classroom space with ones students, to supervising on the playground, back to autonomous classroom teaching, to lunch and recess, to an improvisational performance, and back to classroom teaching.

Mixed within with these spaces was another kind of space within their schedule – for collaboration. During the school day, they also had a scheduled space for collaboration in the form of a planning period. The planning period their first year was just after the kids arrived for school, while the second year it was changed to the last eighty minutes of the day, right up to dismissal at 3:20 pm. Other spaces for collaboration included before and after school, at lunch (two teachers), during weekends and scheduled breaks, during Friday afternoon meetings and teacher work days, or at other brief, opportunistic times during the school day. Heather described how much of the various kinds of space she wanted in her day in both a real and metaphorical sense: "I don't want too much of the same. I want something melodic [laughing] where it's LOUD, then not so loud."

She then compared the times of collaboration and autonomy: "It seems like with the collaboration that there are times when you ARE all working together, and you're sharing everything the same, and you're in the same moment together. And there are also times when you're off doing your own thing." There were times, she said, when she couldn't be sure as to when a collaborative or autonomous event would arise: "It seems that it's a given that you don't really know when you're getting into it."

The teachers also maintained a degree of separation away from PCS. From the beginning they didn't contact each other by email, and only rarely by phone. For Heather, such separation was out of respect for the other person's family time. Except for eating lunch together on most Fridays, collaboration outside the school was minimal. They rarely phoned each other and didn't email each other at all. Heather recalled a discussion about how teaching "takes away from our own family time with our children," and that they were "trying not to impede on family time too much." Heather confirmed their brief discussion about the need to have separation away from school, and how the teachers respected this separation almost without exception. Even though separating work and family was not discussed explicitly, they had talked, as Heather asserted, about "the pressures of having a family," putting so much time into the job, and "how intense everything is." Heather described such discussions as "very informal – we didn't make a decision." The second, year, however, they started having more joint family get togethers. Hence, in response to the intensity of their work, the three teachers, for the most part, kept a separation between their work and family lives, though gradually they reduced such separation over the course of their second year together.

Key Teacher Qualities

The teachers talked about, and my observations confirmed, at least four qualities that were vital to their collaborative relationship: personality, intelligence, perspective-taking, and the ability to "sense" each others needs.

Personality

To Heather, collaboration had "a lot to do with personality," and required "a special person." Margret agreed, saying: "I do think personalities are everything." Heather maintained that: "We just generally respect and like each other," and felt such respect helped their relationship to "work really well." According to her, each teacher was likable because each had "a sense of balancing the need for attention and the need to share and the need to lead…so we have a nice balance of giving of ourselves, but not domineering." In her opinion, such balance was not upset by personality differences: "You just kind of laugh about their idiosyncratic ways, but they're not a problem," in part, because they're "not excessive." Heather felt that in their ever-changing environment each teacher was always adjusting in order to maintain a sense of balance in their relationship.

Intelligence & Perspective-Taking

Heather thought that Margret and Katerina were "very willing and very smart," emphasizing how both were "incredibly intelligent and they catch on very quickly, and that makes things so much easier." Of all the qualities needed to be a good teacher-collaborator, Heather liked intelligence and "understanding the other person's point of view" because they "make things go more smoothly, like imagining potential problems and doing what you can to avoid those, visualizing what could work well and promoting that." She provided an example of such perspective-taking: "When you're being considerate of other people's feelings, you realize: here's the way you want it, but you understand it might not be the way they see it, so you're open to whatever is best for

everybody involved, instead of just having your way all the time." She concluded that what was important was "your past experience and your image of the future," and being "kinda smart and open to the possibilities."

"Sensing" Each Others Needs

The teachers soon figured out how to "read," or "sense" each other. For example, after a couple of weeks of seeing each other in the same classroom, Margret felt that she knew Heather better and could therefore respond more appropriately to her: "You could just tell when things aren't right with her. Now I know her well enough to know: 'Oh, she's not feeling well.' I know how she deals with that." Margret soon learned that "when Heather's ready to go, she's needs to go, whether it's hunger or she's going wherever." At these times, Margret said she knew not to say to Heather: "Hey, what do you think about . . . ," explaining that "you're not going to get anywhere." Margret thought that Heather was "pretty good" about expressing what she needed, and that Heather's frankness at these times helped her to learn faster about Heather's needs.

Often times, according to Heather, the teachers were involved with each other through "sensing" the other person's needs or germane issues. She included "sensing" among those qualities that characterize a good teacher-collaborator:

> I think it takes the same things that make a good teacher: very observant, you can put yourself in another person's perspective, see their point of view and how they would learn best, and what would be good for them. So I think that all the things that make a good teacher automatically make you a good collaborator also.

A different kind of "sensing" occurred the first day after spring break of their second year. Each teacher was in the habit of writing a question-of-the-day each day before school started. Margret was late and hurriedly said "Hi" on her way up to her loft

classroom, and wrote her question: “Did you read over spring break?” As it turned out, Heather had already written: “How much did you read over spring break?” Katerina, unlike Margret, had seen Heather’s question and copied it for her question. They thought this was symbolic of how they had developed their ability to “sense” each other, and as a persuasive indication of how close they had become.

Personality, intelligence and perspective-taking, and the ability to see the other teacher’s point-of-view were mutually valued by the teachers. They were key qualities that helped the teachers to balance, or maintain a certain sense of equilibrium in their daily collaborations each other. Developing collaborative roles was a different kind of balancing act, as we see below.

Developing Collaborative Roles

The teachers soon settled into roles that helped to define their collaborative relationship. Since their first meeting, each teacher was curious about which roles would be played and by whom. Margret described the assignment of roles as a process that was “all about socialization,” likening it to the first phase of a marriage relationship:

> It *is* like a marriage and at the very first you’re kinda feeling each other out, kinda watching, and then you get to a certain point where you know you have to have communication. You have to say things that either bother you or things that you want to do or not. Everybody has to feel heard and everybody has to feel cared about, and everybody has to know that they’re going to be times when they’re going to have to be flexible and give things up or not do things, but I have to say that it’s not often.

Within their first week of teaching in the same classroom, the three teachers began to figure out specific roles. Margaret asserted that:

> What’s cool is that it became clear pretty soon that Katerina would sort of have that technological thing that Heather and I don’t, so she immediately had her

> things that she was really good at and it became pretty clear pretty soon that I was more of: "I got books." I've got tons of books. I'll say: "Okay, here are some books. If you guys want to, let's share these around," or, "Here's the author of the week. I've got a bunch of books by him," and I'll pass them around, so it sort of seems to be kind of my job.

Katerina and Margaret concurred that Katerina, being a first-year teacher with only a small collection of books, was helped a great deal by offers to access Margret's books. Heather, as one of her roles, remembered: "I kinda took on the math problem writing, the CGI problem, and how to do the Lifeskills performance." Heather became the one who answered Margret's and Katerina's questions about curriculum and the workings or culture of PCS. Katerina thought of Heather as being "really big into science," and that Margret had "really big ideas of social studies."

Margret described the development of their roles: "We all are coming out with our own strengths." In a similar fashion, Denise, when she was one of three K-2 teachers at the original campus, talked about what roles developed there, including the benefits:

> We all had different kinds of strengths. One teacher had more of a creative arts background, and I think my kids got more of that from her than they would have from me. I did lots of singing and the other teachers didn't. You did things that you saw somebody else do, so you learned more about teaching, or you exposed your kids to more things than you would otherwise think to do.

Here, Margret, in a general sense, and Denise, more specifically, talk about some of the ways in which teachers respond to a setting where other teachers are in the same room.

As the teachers discussed ideas, they played various roles. They shared the role of "Idea Producer" (chiefly Margret and Heather), while Heather acted as a "Governor," on occasion pulling back and recasting an idea in order to make it more "do-able." Such

roles are exemplified and labeled below as they discuss a storytelling template for use by their students:

H: I can see the picture place kind of shrinking or something. (Idea Producer)
M: A plan, you know, a plan.
K: A smaller plan. And I can see different kinds of plans, like at the beginning they're big. (Idea Producer)
M: Yeah.
H: But those will come after we teach (M: yeah) how to use 'em. (Governor)
M: Yeah, yeah.
H: You could have one that has a web in it. (Idea Producer)

And in greater detail, including roles where someone is assigning a task, helping, or empowering, the teachers complemented one another as they discussed their joint curriculum:

M: (as Idea Producer) So anyway, we got into this ABC book – they begged me to read – you know that whole, they can only sit for five minutes. Then we read "Chicka Chicka Boom Boom" (H: yeah) when I was showin' 'em all the ABC books, and I told 'em they could make their own (H: yeah, yeah) so I'd like to get that goin' (H: yeah). I think tomorrow night for homework (H: yeah) and get it going (H: yeah). So I will make the – if somebody will make the kindergarten, because you have an idea about the kindergarten, I'll make the "A my name is Alice one." (assigning)
H: Okay.
M: Then we'll get that going (H: okay), so if you'll that I'll do "A, my name is Alice" for tomorrow.
H: We'll get her (K) cuttin' some continent pages for us. (assigning)
K: Yeah, I already printed them out. (helping)
M: Great, okay. And so we can use those for the puzzles.
H: What do we do with patterns? (empowering)
M: I don't know. I think that right now – would you (J) (helping) mind cuttin' some strips of white paper? Do we have long white paper? And I'm just thinkin' (H: I've got the strips already) of lettin' the kids glue a repetition pattern on there.
H: Yeah, I started off with that too.

The teachers felt at the beginning of their second year together that they complemented one another more like "mutual mentors," helping each other to develop joint curriculum ideas and make joint decisions. Katerina, for example, shifted from her

place as an inductee and observer-mimic, to more of a confident, more assertive, co-teacher:

> M: You know, I was thinking about the playground -- should we, if all three are gonna be on duty? (gets cut off)
> K: You know what, I think maybe we should do that the first week.
> M: Okay. That's cool.

Developing specific collaborative roles gave the teachers another way to provide balance, in this case, as they worked together to accomplish teaching tasks via their respective strengths, as well as to do some learning as result of a collaborative relationship.

Parent Roles

Parents played a small role in this collaboration. Parents were fairly active in each one of the three classes, often volunteering more than the requisite twenty hours per school year that PCS required. Beyond helping individual teachers with specific class duties, many parents worked with the teachers to organize and conduct special lessons and events. The most involved collaboration with parents typically took place at the end of each bloc. The three teachers would meet and discuss their idea for a culminating activity on the last day of the bloc—an idea that helped the teachers to integrate that bloc's theme. On one occasion in the fall of 2003, after detailed planning with the teachers, a group of eleven parents organized and conducted an "All Around the World" event that day, while the three teachers attended a conference in the next town. The parents and three substitute teachers (I being one of these three) conducted this hour-long event. In order to conduct these special events, the parents who had volunteered would sit down with Heather, Margret, and Katerina to "hash out," or plan the details required to make the event successful. The parents would mostly listen and ask questions during

these half-hour meetings, though occasionally offering ideas. Every once in a while a parent idea would be accepted by the teachers and achieve fruition during the event.

Parents also helped by jointly supervising field trips with the teachers, and they helped with Friday morning K-1 class rotations, repeating various lessons for each class like sign language, songs that fit with the current theme, and other areas that depended upon a parent's particular expertise. On such rotation occasions, the teachers would share parent expertise, like a mom from Katerina's class who would conduct sign language in Margret's loft area. The teachers had learned that their students' parents were dedicated and competent at completing such events and teaching tasks, increasing their trust in them and granting them more involved roles over time, such as the "All Around the World" special event and the annual field day. Parents volunteering their help to the teachers, while an important part of this context, served a purpose in their collaboration, allowing the teachers a measure of freedom to continue learning their craft outside of the classroom.

Section Summary

Developing a collaborative relationship was accomplished quickly by the teachers. From the beginning they told each other stories as one of the chief ways in which they developed rapport and bonded with each other. In the middle of work they told each other stories. With just a few days to get ready for their students, they felt a great sense of urgency to accomplish tasks, and as with most teachers, they felt a pressure to perform. They knew they had to "get things where they went smoothly," as Margret

put it, “and the sooner the better.” And they each knew that mutual rapport would make their work together more productive.

The teachers then went beyond rapport to develop a deep sense of caring for each other over the first few months. Their caring and bonding reminded them of being like “family” or “sisters.” Their relationships seemed to develop, in part, out of a mutual appreciation and respect for one another’s unique strengths, and insofar as four key qualities: personality, intelligence, perspective-taking, and the ability to sense each other’s needs. We start to see through their caring, complementary roles, key qualities, and even in their work with the parents, that the teachers were reaching, often with urgency, toward developing some kind of dynamic stasis or equilibrium in both their relationships and in terms of performing their overall purpose: delivering better curricula and methods of instruction.

D. Working on Curriculum & Instruction

As we’ve seen, the teachers focused the majority of their time in the direction of delivering high quality curriculum and instruction. Discussions about various parts of their curriculum and instruction happened daily. On average, these discussions focused most often on fieldtrips, science experiments, and social studies projects, and to a lesser extent on parent letters and their learning centers. These encompassed the main areas in which the teachers chose to spend their time working together. The first section includes “Figuring Out & Doing Tasks,” so constructed due to the interwoven nature of the teachers’ thoughts and actions, followed by a more reflective section where the teachers

describe how they worked together on curriculum and instruction: "Describing Teacher Collaboration."

It's important to note that the teachers and my peer reviewers agreed (as they did with other parts of the manuscript, unless otherwise noted) with the following assessments of their discussions. Also, I remind readers that because of my position, the way I've described their discussions is through a lens where I'm the only one outside the trio (though not completely), able to see over time three teachers through not only their words and actions, but their context, whether the school's or their specific discussion context, all with the knowledge of months of participation, observation, fieldnotes, multiple interviews, negative cases, member checks, reviews of relevant literature, a reflective praxis, and several times through the body of data.

Figuring Out & Doing Tasks

The literacy and numeracy curricula, new to Margret and Katerina, were subjects of frequent discussion the first year, but were discussed less frequently the second year. Margret and Katerina felt much more proficient with their literacy and numeracy lessons after a year of on-the-job experience and three forays into formal training on these subjects (though Katerina never attended the CGI numeracy training). Instead, they focused mostly on six primary areas for collaboration: long-range planning, science and social studies, field trips, learning centers, Lifeskills, and their weekly parent letter.

Described below, the teachers' discussions, regardless of subject matter, used similar processes. They referred to their discussions, regardless of content area, as "hashing it out." While it was not my intent to perform a detailed sociolinguistic analysis,

the teachers and I found that certain facets of their discussions contained basic patterns that we thought to be connected intimately with their process of collaborating. Hence, part of my text below begins to describe such patterns, beginning with their discussions and activities before each bloc.

Discussions

The way in which the teachers conducted joint discussions varied. The example below is one of several in this part. For now what I want to show is how at times the flow of their discussion was not a linear progression, instead jumping from topic to topic, many of which were unrelated to their stated topic or topic question. These unrelated discussions often went for several minutes or longer, a few discussions lasting almost a half hour. My role in some of these instances was to go along with whatever the teachers had decided to talk about, purposely not wanting to hint at or direct them toward a different topic. One example of an unrelated discussion, a typical brief interlude of about a minute or so, began with Margret commenting about Heather writing down a schedule for their field trips. Their topic of discussion then quickly switched to work style, being tired, the weather, multiple intelligences, and organizing their books (H=Heather; K=Katerina; M=Margret):

> M: Alright, Heather, you doin' field trips?
> H: A-hum.
> M: You're such a task-oriented person. It's her gold coming out.
> K: Yeah.
> H: [in a high voice] I wanna go home [laughs]. I'm really tired. I've been burning too much midnight oil.
> M: Yep. I hear ya. I'm sleeping all weekend long, not getting out of bed.
> K: Yeah, right – and that [inaudible]
> M: My wishful thinking.
> K: Yeah, so Teddy fell asleep after that whole incident.

H: Yeah?
K: He told me he had nightmares about tornadoes.
H: That wind really freaked them out didn't it?
M: Was it really that windy?
K: I was kinda running there, and suddenly everything flew off! [A parent comes in and M talks to him briefly while the rest of us stop and listen, then M returns and brings up the subject of multiple intelligences.]
M: Is there an Art Smart?
H: No.
K: A Picture Smart.
M: I wanna do something along those lines too, but I don't know [H: yeah] where to go with that.
J: Multiple intelligences.
M: Yeah, I wanna get a little questionnaire – but nobody said this is a – do you have an idea, some easy things to do with K-1?
J: When I worked with multiple intelligences, I have to really kind of laboriously think through: okay, what's an activity that is going to address this intelligence and this objective.
M: Well they [ITI staff] were sayin' there's these activities and questionnaires, the words they like the best [talking over each other]
J: There are some good resources out there now for activities that address multiple intelligences.
M: 'Cause I'd like to do – in the model classroom the kids looked at 'em
J: If you keep thinking about your kids, you'll know which of them is which soon.
M: Yeah.

Heather then talked briefly about where certain books were to be placed on the shelves, whereupon Margret, as she typically did, repeated the question for discussion: "Alright, what fieldtrips do we have?" This discussion represented the many times when the teachers would address a half dozen to almost two dozen topics in a ten-minute discussion; often interspersed with topics unrelated to their curriculum and instruction.

Before Each Bloc

The teachers got together for the purpose of figuring out various priorities before each bloc. In mid-July of 2003 the teachers began their second year together, meeting at the classroom to discuss procedures and the overall theme for the year, as well the

appropriate activities for their first bloc. They typically spent one to two days, often on a weekend before the beginning of each 9-week bloc, planning how the overall ITI theme would be enacted each week for a particular bloc. Their overall theme was: "Patterns Shape Our World." They assigned each bloc with a relevant subtheme, in order: "Round the World," "Diamond in the Rough" (about plants), "Texas Animal Square Dance," and the last bloc was "Healthy Superstars." The teachers discussed and confirmed these themes during a meeting three days before PCS students came back from the summer break. The decisions for these themes had already been made the previous year when they sat down to figure out their two-year cycle, so they mostly confirmed these decisions, often taking a few minutes to word-smith, or fine-tune the exact titles of these themes. Because I was out-of-town during this first meeting, I asked the teachers if they would mind recording their discussion without me. "No problem," was the consensus. They hardly seemed phased by this alternative, appearing to be quite at ease whether I was there or not (after all, if they could talk about feminine products and female health issues in front of me, I assumed that my absence would not be a deterrent or in any way alter their typical behavior). In any case, they recorded almost two hours of their rapidly paced discussion.

Typically, after sitting down and conversing first about non-essential items, the teachers would begin to discuss a schedule that typically started from a written outline that Heather had done: "I have the whole year figured out as far as what we're studying each week, what field trips. It changes a little bit, depending upon the availability of field trips." She added, "I just get too nervous if I don't." Each year Katerina entered Heather's

plan into the computer, thus making it available as a reference for current and future planning. Appendix H shows how Heather initially outlined the third bloc of the second year. The teachers would then discuss this outline. Such a plan, Katerina thought, made their time together "a little shorter and a little more effective." She added that: "One of the reasons is that Heather already had this year-long plan and we just had to think about whether we want to keep it."

Margret also brought a written list of items she wanted the group to address at this first pre-bloc meeting. Rather than address Heather's year-long plan, after a 40-second discussion of their specials schedule for the first bloc and a couple of other topics, Margret asked Heather and Katerina to first consider an item on her list: procedures. The administration had brought up the topic of procedures in a general school meeting the day before.

The teachers often discussed their upcoming bloc for hours at a time. Rather than commenting on each line or turn in their discussion at this early juncture, I've included the excerpt below as a means to afford readers a broader, initial sense of how these teachers worked together on a task. Just prior to this excerpt, Margret had concluded their initial discussion of the new specials teachers: "You gotta treat your teachers right." Heather then initiated their discussion below about the procedures they wanted for the upcoming year. She appears to be directing most of this discussion in a jovial, upbeat manner. At one point, she can't find the procedure on a school handout and makes fun of herself. Margret observes what she's doing and gives her an excuse, "you're scanning." They are each asking questions of one another, brainstorming, freely expessing their

ideas at several points, clarifying the bathroom procedure, and confirming along the way what they're going to do about this procedure for their students:

H: Yeah, yeah, okay. So you want to work on some procedures. Let's look at the list that we got at our general meeting and see what seems to be missing that we are absolutely gonna have to have that first day.
M: Some of the things we'll want to do with the kids, and some of the things [H: Yeah.] I think it's [gets cut off]
H: But these things are already described—you can't change these.
M: Yeah.
H: And I like the one—the bathroom one is not on here I don't think.
M: Restroom procedures are clean?
H.: Oh, is it on here? Yes, I like that.
M: Only thing I was thinking is do we have to say something about locking the door?
H: Yes. Is the restroom thing on here?
K: Yeah, first thing.
M: It's the very first one.
H: fffffff—that's why I can't see it. [laughs]
M: Yeah, you're scanning.
H.: [laughing] I'm scanning and went right over it. Okay. Yeah, and we'll just have to—I took off the little boy and girl signs because it was old. But we do need to [gets cut off]
M: Do we need to say it? Do we have to have a boy and a girl one?
H: Do you remember? [laughing] Do you want our girls to go through that?
M.: Well, okay, this is the deal. It became such a stigma, if there was somebody in one, [H: Oh, yeah] then they wouldn't go to the other one. What if we just said it's a restroom and may be that will [gets cut off]
H: I think our first graders from last year [M: will just sort of] will continue to make that be and impose that cultural [laughing] thing.
M: It's just like having all the boys lined up there, [H: Oh yeah, yeah] I mean if you just said it's a bathroom, [H: yeah] go to whichever one, they may still line up there, it's just something to explore. If you just said it's the restroom [H: yeah] and go, why do we need 'em different?
K: Are we gonna continue the name—signing their name when they go to the bathroom? I like that.
H: It sure solved that problem!
K: It's so much cleaner.
H.: Man it sure solved that.
K: Bill [Maintenance] was like really impressed.
M: Well, and that's the other thing is that—I mean procedures with the bathroom if we—they should [gets cut off]

H: I think if we just spell it out from the beginning: this is—we are trusting—talk about trustworthiness. And say: if there is a problem with this then you have to go to what we did before and it takes longer and rather not, la di da. But that's what we do to solve our problems, so it's our problem solving procedure. I think at first let's try not to, but the first time man [snaps her fingers], bing, it's like uuu, that's the problem we were talking about, so we have to do this to solve it.
M: So what do you guys think about having them just generic [H: let's try it]—there are two bathrooms in our classroom.
H: Let's try that.
M.: I think it will, there's just no reason not to. I mean it's ridiculous—it's a toilet. You know, you can go in that one, it's all right if it's the coolest bathroom.[laughing] And there's Julie [sniffs her nose, makes crying sounds].
K: I actually had to send kids out because I thought they were gonna pee in their pants, but they would NOT go in the other bathroom.
H: Yeah, yeah. I think that's gonna carry over [M & K: yeah], but [gets cut off]
M: But if you say [gets cut off]
K: Probably the new ones, you know.
M: See, I'm just thinking of kinda going through [gets cut off]
H: How would you feel about a uni-bathroom? [laughs]
M: So the only saying that we might add on here would be: lock the door. That would be specific to us.
H: Yes.
M: Be quiet, be clean, be quick, be private.
K: I love that.
H.: Yeah.
K: And don't go in there with two people.
M: That kinda covers the private [H: that's right]—you lock it [H: let's do that]. Wouldn't that be private?
H: Yeah. [laughs]
M: Okay. See, I like how they did be, be, be, be.
H.: I know. I used to do that and have little bees all-around. [laughs]
M: Oh, did you? That's cute!
H: I'd look at the class list—where are the "B's."
K: Oh, you had lots of "B's"?
H: Well, I mean just when I decorated. I would always have my classroom with four main classroom rules and they all start with "B," and I had little bees all around.
M.: Oh, very cute.
H: And we'd talk about "Bee" behavior, and how they worked together.
M: Het, that's lovely!
H: A society of interesting words. [laughs] It was fun!

Note how Margret summarized their discussion: “Be quiet, be clean, be quick, be private,” which Katerina and Heather confirmed as a good idea. Heather then initiated a topic change, talking about one of her past ideas, which the other two teachers supported. Katerina then shifted the discussion to her concern about the first week and planning for the parent conferences:

> K: That is [inaudible]. I’m just thinking about what to do the first week.
> M: Okay. Well, and do you want to do that? Do we want to speak to that? Is that where your brain is at? And do procedures later?
> K: No, I was just wondering -- I was horrified at the thought of four weeks and then do the [parent] conferences, like yeah they are gonna all do their own conferences. Sure, this is gonna so work, yeah. I can see Clara’s mom [gets cut off]
> H: We'll do it in big group and role play it?
> K: Yeah, but I can see the parents go like totally [H: Yeah.]: this is ridiculous. Like Clara’s mom, she's gonna say I can do that at home.

Margret, concerned about Katerina’s fears, checks to see where Katerina wants the discussion to go. Heather, still focused on their previous discussion, is asking a question about how they should implement the new bathroom procedure, which Katerina ignores. While figuring out a task, they weren’t always discussing the same topic, choosing instead to focus on a topic of her own choosing. Such discussions were typical, often figuring out a solution to the task, or at least a part of it, but leaving out how they would implement the task, at least at the time. They would come back to implementing the task later in the discussion or on a another day, in either case having to review, re-identify their solution, and then figure out how to implement it.

For the third bloc of their second year together, the teachers sat down a week early to fill in some details, largely devoted to field trips. “This nine-week plan [points to paper], we all came up with this together,” Katerina said. The following excerpt provides

an idea of the level of detail discussed during these pre-bloc meetings, in this instance about a field trip, as well as a beginning notion of how they worked together:

1. H: Are you doin' the Hubble zoo?
2. K: Yeah, I already did that.
3. M: You did? What's the timing on that?
4. K: Ten. Basically we can come whenever. She didn't seem to be [gets cut off]
5. H: When do they open?
6. K: We're not going to have a tour there, so we're just gonna get there. She said ten o'clock, and I said that's fine.
7. H: No problem.
8. M: What I'm wondering about—on some of these they're far away, but we can get there by ten?
9. K: Or we can get there later—since we didn't have a tour.
10. M: What I'm worried about is extending the bus.
11. K: Oh yes, I already talked to Gus about extending the bus, and I would give him a written note about it.
12. M: We're gonna be an hour and a half on the bus at the very least.
13. K: I kinda need to leave, 'cause the tire place is gonna close.

Note, in addition to how they discussed this field trip, how their tone, pacing, and physicality played roles in how I've described their discussion below. First, Heather (1) raises the issue of field trips with Katerina, and Katerina (2), it turns out, has taken the initiative to find out about some of its details. A tone of gratification in Margret's voice (3) and a pleasant look of surprise on her face shows Katerina that Margret is pleased with her initiative. Margret quickly follows up with a question seeking information. Katerina (4) answers succinctly, but as she elaborates her sentence is interrupted by Heather's (5) question seeking further information or elaboration from Katerina. Katerina (6) continues her previous thought, providing further information and an elaboration of how ten o'clock was confirmed. Heather (7) quickly agrees, and Margret (8) questions whether they can make a timely arrival at the zoo. Katerina (9) replies with an alternate idea and reason, and Margret (10) voices a concern about the bus. Katerina (11) again

shows that she took the initiative to think through and make appropriate arrangements with the bus driver, to which Margret (12) restated her concern in a modified way. Katerina (13) doesn't acknowledge Margret's restatement of her concern, and instead excuses herself to go attend to her car.

After the teachers reviewed this excerpt and my assessment of it, we agreed that this was a typical discussion, focusing on details and verifying, or confirming those details, including a ramification or two. As usual, the overall tenor was pleasant and the pace was somewhat rushed. We start to see self-initiative in following through with a task as exemplified by Katerina having already completed the groundwork for this field trip. We also see indications of personalities and relationships. For instance, Margret, concerned, took great care in making sure the details were correct and appropriate. Heather appeared to be readily agreeable, while Katerina appeared to be somewhat direct (though she had already told Heather and Margret that she had to leave early) and exits the group quickly. Later on, we see that the teachers acknowledge Katerina's directness, and accept it without much difficulty.

Science & Social Studies

Science and social studies were curricular areas that required a great deal of figuring out for the teachers. Unlike the school mandated ITI, CGI, and LN pieces of their curriculum, science and social studies projects relied almost totally upon the teachers' creativity and initiative. Similar to other such long-term projects, the example of the cave project below provides a typical look at how the teachers generated ideas for the science and social studies part of their curriculum.

Cave Project.

Often times the teachers would talk about an on-going joint project with the purpose of making it work better. In April of their first school-year together, I audio taped the teachers discussing an on-going science project, making stalactites and stalagmites. During the previous week they had briefly discussed how to construct a cave and use concentrated salt water to drip into the cave. Each teacher constructed a cave inside a cardboard box, laying it open on its side. On top of each box were three small paper cups of concentrated salt water. A few strands of yarn ran from inside the cup through holes they had cut in the top of the box, so that the yarn entered the cave from its roof. The idea was for the salt water to gradually be absorbed along the full length of each strand of yarn, then drip into the cave. They were having a problem with the salt water solution not traveling down the length of yarn. What follows is a description of their discussion of the cave project that took place an hour after school let out.

While the teachers were talking about how their kids were acting in competitive ways, Margret brought up the subject of working on their caves (M=Margret, H=Heather, K=Katerina):

> M: Now, let me ask you this, are we still gonna make the solution tomorrow to put in the caves? In here it said four pounds [of salt] – I mean like that's a lot.
> H: But that's more, that's for like you know . . .
> K: That's for the whole class.
> H: I knew it had to be really saturated for making like eyeballs—that it works. I have the pan, but I'm thinking of those glass beaker-type things? [K: a-huh, a-huh.] We just need enough to fill our three little paper cups.
> M: And then I can start and stop it again? Do you have to keep refilling it at a certain point when they drip through? Do you just keep adding to it?
> H: I don't remember that part. We'll see how it goes.
> M: We'll watch over the weekend. We can make more Monday, [H: Right.] then start back up again [H: Right.], so if we get my box ready, I guess . . . I made

some cave things then, but I didn't get all my holes punched in. And I took the paper out.
H: You didn't like the paper?
M: The way I did it, I realized—let me see yours and I'll see if I put the paper back in there or not.
H: I think I'm just gonna tape 'em. I don't think I'm gonna do the holes. It'll look better if you only see the stalactites and not the cup—hanging down.
K: I don't understand this—can you say that one more time?
M: If that's all that needs to happen is one string goes down—they were talking about loopin'—I was trying to read it today, but I think [gets cut off]
K: Well, they had more . . .
H: . . . strings in the solution.
M: Yeah, as long as one end's in the solution and the other one's hanging down.
H: I think so.
K: And you can have one string out of each cup, so you're making three stalactites.
M: That would make four.
H: So there's four.
K: Four. Okay. And that's when they loop—and you loop it.
H: But, you know, when they said to cut it, they said nine inches, and that's like [gets cut off]
K: I'm just thinking [gets cut off by M]]
M: Fourteen inches, I don't know, but I was thinking [gets cut off by H]
H: So I just did twelve inches, and that looks right to me [giggles].
K: I just like [inaudible]
M: Then it's like wigglin' away, and I was thinking, "There's no way."
K: And it also has to be aluminum foil.
M: Underneath, yeah.
H: 'Cause it'll lose a little bit, but mine didn't lose a lot.
M: Maybe we can bring like a baking pan or something.
K: We also still have some aluminum foil.
H: Do you know where it went?
K: I put it in the closet.
H: Oh, that's right, that's right.
M: And then tomorrow for sign language, I …

Their discussion then switched to sign language, and included a discussion of an art/literacy project, “class cloud books,” and how they would rotate their students the next day. Later in the same week the teachers addressed their cave project again two times, but only in passing ways during transitions to recess and lunch. They exchanged

additional suggestions for getting the salt water to travel down the strands of yarn, but to little avail. The cave experiment ended with few stalactites or stalagmites, though their comments were mostly positive in relation to what they thought the children learned from the experiment.

Several aspects of this transcript were typical of their curricular discussions. First, Margret was the one who usually initiated or changed the topic of discussion. Prior to the discussion above, the teachers were talking about ways in which their kids acted competitively. Margret changed this topic to the cave project, and then concluded the cave discussion by changing it to one about sign language.

Second, the teachers often asked questions. They used questions, as Margret did above, in order to change to a different topic or to try and clarify how something was supposed to work: "Do you have to . . ." Heather most often used questions that asked about the other teachers likes and dislikes as above: "You didn't like that paper?" Katerina often asked questions that helped her to understand what was going on: "I don't understand this – can you say that one more time?" The teachers frequently asked questions that helped them find things, mostly those items that were stored in the classroom. The pronoun "we" was typically used by the teachers when they asked questions, as well as in other statements. For example, Margret asked: "Are we gonna…?," or offered, "maybe we can…?"

Third, each one interrupted the dialogue, seemingly at will and without repercussions. Whenever one of the three teachers was interrupted by either of the other two teachers, I bracketed that place in the transcript: [gets cut off]. As the teachers

reviewed transcripts of their discussions, they commented to me, with some surprise, how often it seemed that a teacher's speech would get cut off by one or the other of them. Such interrupted speech remained unchanged afterwards, and continued as before in almost equal measure by each teacher. They didn't mind that it was a part of their discussion routine, subsuming it under the mutual phrase: "That's just a part of hashing things out." They agreed that talking over one another or frequent interruptions weren't a problem. As we see above, another type of interruption of speech was in the middle of another teacher's sentence, offering some kind of confirmatory phrase, like: "Right," or "A-huh, a-huh." Such phrases also happened after a completed sentence, offering in either case a form of approval and/or encouragement. The teachers were then willing to proceed without knowing if everything would work in the cave experiment: "We'll see how it goes," Heather suggested.

At about the mid-point, the discussion rose to a higher level of involvement and enthusiasm, marked by a faster pace of speech, more frequent interruptions of speech, and rising emotions that seemed to be of a positive nature. The excerpt from above was conducted in a staccato-like manner: Margret reminded them, referring to the authors of the "cave" instructions: "But you know, when they said to cut it, they said nine inches, and that's like…" Cutting her off, Katerina said: "I'm just thinking…," who in turn was interrupted by Margret: "Fourteen inches, I don't know, but I was thinking…" Heather then cut her off, explaining: "So I just did twelve inches, and that looks right to me [giggling]." Katerina then tried again to enter the discussion: "I just like…," but was again interrupted by both Margret and Heather, the three of them then talking

simultaneously, and, to me, almost inaudibly. Referring to the yarn, Margret said: “Then it's like wigglin' away, and I was thinking there's no way." Margret then paused and said: “Let me see yours and I'll see if I put the paper back in there or not.” This part of the discussion resembled the many times when the teachers would get excited about organizing and conducting the various areas of their curriculum.

Field Trips

PCS held a firm belief in the educational value of their expeditionary or field trip emphasis. The teachers based their field trips on a particular theme for each bloc, and in their second year together they decided that the first nine-week bloc would be: “Around the World.” During the first week of their second year together, the teachers sat down to figure out what field trip would be appropriate for each weekly theme. In the first bloc of the year, they scheduled field trips starting in the third week, focusing for the first two and half weeks on procedures and routines for their children. Like most of their joint activities, they had already decided early in their first year to apportion equally the responsibility for each bloc’s field trips. This meant two to three trips per teacher for each bloc. The teacher responsible for a particular field trip would make the necessary calls and arrangements for their respective trip, periodically reporting back to the other two teachers about specific details that she had confirmed. Sometimes the teachers would discuss the pros and cons of the arrangements, and whether they needed to plan for other activities on the field trip that would keep their students occupied appropriately.

Timing the field trips was also important, pedagogically speaking, as they discussed their rationale for field trips in relation to the weekly theme they wanted to

emphasize, something that would alter their extant scheduling around field trips. Margret began their discussion with a question, one that she had alluded to a minute or so before:

1. M: Alright, what field trips do we have?
2. H: So I was thinkin'. We'd back everything up according to what I have on this list so that we're doin' the fieldtrip on Thursday for what we're studying the next week.
3. M: Okay.
4. H: So that we have that to fall back on.
5. M: Alright. Being there first. [H: A-hum.] Okay.
6. H: It's kinda weird 'cause you lose some over the Friday, Saturday, Sunday.
7. M: Yeah.
8. H: But I think pulling out of that will be [gets cut off]
9. M: I assume they'll get it all in the big picture [H: Yeah.]. It almost seems like if you don't start on a Thursday – do a little somethin' – then they have something to go to after being there (H: Yeah) and then go 'till the next Wednesday on that continent, start the next Thursday before we go. The problem is we won't have a whole lot of time [H: I know.] to get a little something. So maybe Wednesday to Wednesday? Maybe on Wednesday switch to the new – so that we have one day to talk a little bit about where we're gonna go – to the temple – so on Wednesday we start on Asia [H: Yeah.], read the book, do all the stuff, then we have the rest of week, Monday and Tuesday to go. Would that work out?
10. H: I think so.
11. M: It's nice to know something [H: Right.] when they're there [H: Right.].
12. H: Yeah, yeah, some reason for doin' it.
13. M: A-hum.
14. H: So, July 31st, would be when we need [gets cut off]
15. K: Do we wanna stay for [inaudible]?
16. H: …to go at least a week after that. I don't know yet [replying to K]. We'll have to see. [talking over each other]

In this part of their field trip discussion we hear the teachers talking about their thinking, which seems to be aimed at providing a structure for the timing of their field trips and subsequent instruction. The terms in quotes below are mostly from an Interactive Qualitative Analysis (IQA) session and follow-up focus groups in August of 2003, used here to help describe the processes the teachers employed during their discussions. After an early analysis of these discussions, I found that my coding was

remarkably similar to a framework employed by Scheidel and Crowell (1962) during their study: "Idea Development in Small Discussion Groups." Thus, my analysis that follows incorporates several categories from their "reach-test" framework.

In the discussion above, Margret (1) has initiated this topic with a question as she often does. Heather (2) begins by not answering Margret's query, instead volunteering her idea for how to regard the scheduling of their field trips. Margret (5) supplies a rationale for Heather's idea, affirming it in the process. Heather (6) then delimits, or provides a negative rationale for her idea. Margret (9) then "plays out," or extends Heather's idea into a more complete version, thinking about pedagogical implications along the way. She also suggests a variation of the idea, introducing the Thursday field trip on Wednesday, extends the idea into the future to "play out" how it might work, then concludes with a question asking for agreement. Heather (10) affirms Margret's idea, and Margret (11) supplies an additional rationale, which is then affirmed and paraphrased by Heather (12), who in turn is affirmed by Margret (13). Heather (14 and 16) completes this segment of the discussion by providing a specific date for beginning this new idea. Katerina has chosen to listen mostly, asking a question toward the end of the segment (15) to which Heather responds (16). They've accepted Heather's idea and made additions or modifications through a series of agreements or affirmations, often interjecting an "okay," "alright," a "right," a "yeah," an "a-hum," "I think so," or an "I know." Thus, according to them, they've "hashed out" an idea for scheduling thematic topics in relation to Thursday's field trip: the Wednesday to Wednesday plan. (Three

weeks later, the teachers abandoned the Wednesday to Wednesday plan for having activities centered around the Thursday field trip, considering it to be "not practical.")

Saigon Market.

This field trip discussion then shifted immediately to a consideration of Latin America and appropriate activities for that part of their theme, followed quickly by the next part of their "Around the World" theme, Asia. Below I follow the planning and implementation of the trip to the Saigon Market grocery store from its beginning on July 23rd to its completion on August 14th. I do this in order to portray typical discussion patterns over time, as well as another part of my role in this collaboration. Margret began this discussion, once again, by changing the topic via a question (1), and the discussion proceeded as follows ("J" refers to me):

1. M: Did we do the grocery store – the Chinese grocery store?
2. H: Aaaaa, find out about that.
3. M.: Absolutely, absolutely.
4. H: We don't have one for September 18th.
5. J: How about the Saigon Market – on 183?
6. M: That's the one I was thinking about. Amazing, isn't it? It's huge!
7. K: What is it?
8. J.: Saigon Market. That's where my wife goes all the time.
9. H: Saigon Market. [writes it down]
10. [I explain to K where the Saigon Market is and what is there.]
11. M: See, my thought is – and we've been in the H. E. B.
12. H: Which one do you want to do?
13. M: I am really – I don't have a – how about if I do the Saigon Market?
14. [J & K discuss the merits of the Saigon Market, and Margret then segues to the next field trip with a statement and a question.]

In this part of the discussion, we see Heather in (2) and (12) taking an assertive role by assigning tasks. She also supplies procedural information (4), though the date was later changed to August 14th, and restates my suggestion (9), writing it down for the

group. Margret responds to Heather with an agreement or confirmation (3) and a suggestion (13) that she take the lead responsibility for a field trip to the Saigon Market. I make the first suggestion for the field trip site and information about its general location (5). Margret responds (6) with a thought that was the same as mine, and includes an assertion of an inference regarding the substance of my suggestion: "Amazing, isn't it? It's huge." Katerina (7) asks a question for further information, and I respond (10) with relevant information. Katerina and I (14) continue our discussion about information relevant to the Saigon Market. Finally, Margret's (11) rationale gets cut off by Heather. Before Katerina and I finish our discussion (14), Margret asserts the next topic, the possibility of a field trip to the Jewish day school. Margret maintained her role as topic initiator, yet she also deferred without much hesitation (3 and 13) to Heather's guidance. My suggestion for this field trip was readily accepted and I supplied further information, yet I was not assigned a role at this time, nor did I volunteer for one. Katerina's only apparent objective at this time was to gain clarification about the location of the site and what it had to offer the children.

A couple of minutes and several topics later, we returned to discussing the Saigon Market. After talking about signing up for school duties and special events, Margret began the following discussion:

1. M: Okay, I'm signed up for Saigon Market, or does somebody else wanna do Saigon Market? Are we doing six [field trips this bloc]?
2. H: Well, you've already been there.
3. M: I don't know, I guess I've been there. Maybe between he [Jim] and I, we can put our heads together.
4. J: Yeah, I was gonna say, my wife and I go there. We can help set something up. All these are in the morning, right?

5. M: Yeah. We'll probably leave to go at 9:45 am, and the thing is, I think our field trips are gonna be a little bit longer.
6. H: We're going to some restaurants though. Some of these – I think the old French Embassy has some fairly nice grounds. I've never been, but I've heard nice things about it, so I'd like to see if we could do something.
7. M.: The Saigon Market, if (gets cut off)
8. H: Maybe there are some grounds nearby where we could do a picnic.

Besides changing the topic, Margret (1) checks to see if either Heather or Katerina would prefer to organize the Saigon Market trip. Heather (2) asserts a rationale for Margret's taking charge of the trip, and Margret (3) clarifies her relationship with the market, then suggests an idea for partnering with me. I agree immediately (4), offer the services of my wife and I, then ask a clarifying, procedural question. Margret (5) answers my question, and provides specific information about field trip procedures. Heather (6) changes the topic, asserting that for another field trip she'd like to go to a place she hasn't visited before. Margret tries to reassert and finish the discussion vis-à-vis the Saigon Market, but is cut off by Heather (8), who extends her topic from before. This part of the discussion shows, on the one hand, how readily the teachers, including me, made agreements and offers to help. On the other hand, while topic changes seemed to be made freely by all three teachers, and particularly Margret, we see here that Margret and Heather did not always agree on a topic of discussion, though such disagreement did not cause any visible upset.

Two and a half weeks later, we discussed briefly this field trip. In the intervening time, they had added a second half to this field trip, a visit to a Buddhist temple, which was directly across the street from the new campus. I had also visited the market, speaking to the managers about our idea for a field trip to their establishment. They

recommended that we visit on Friday morning, a day later than we'd planned, because their weekly restocking happened on Thursday afternoon and evening, including a re-supply of fresh fish and live crabs (claws taped) that the children could pick up. I related this information to the teachers and they decided to change from their usual Thursday trip to that Friday, August 15th. It was on Monday of that week, when Heather, Margret, and I, were in Margret's loft discussing the field trip to the Saigon Market and the Buddhist temple. We talked about and decided upon the specific times and schedule for both sites, what would specifically happen during each visit, how to divide the classes, and what the implications were for lunch that day. In the past, Heather said she had difficulties in communicating with the people at the temple because they knew very little English, so I volunteered to talk to my wife about helping with interpreting at the temple on that Friday morning.

The day before this field trip, after school, we discussed a variety of topics, briefly touching upon some of the logistics of the visits to the market and temple. I filled in everyone about what my wife and I had already done earlier in the day, including her call to the market to confirm the details of our field trip and her willingness to meet us at the temple to act as an interpreter between us and the monks there. Heather voiced her happiness about having the specifics of the visit to the market confirmed.

A description of the morning of the visit, while on a Friday instead of the usual Thursday, provides a good example of a typical field trip. Below I recount this field trip from my fieldnotes made that same day. I do so in order to show several facets of the trip, from the details of how the trip transpired to my feelings about it. Hence, I use a re-

telling of how this field trip transpired from my point of view. It is a text that the teachers reviewed and confirmed as accurately portraying their experience, an "echo" of their thoughts. I felt, and the teachers felt, that I could compose such text accurately and vividly because I had been participating as a colleague for almost eight months at this point, and because I had been a K-1 colleague at PCS, experiencing the same training and challenges they had faced. Such use of text, unlike other text I've chosen, helps me to convey, with greater intimacy or closeness to the experience, what field trips were like for me, as well as for the teachers. It is an example of my participant-observer process, utilizing my experience to get closer to that of the teachers. Such text also exemplifies how I wrote fieldnotes, making this part of my method more explicit for readers, which, in turn, affords them another tool by which to evaluate my inquiry and its context. Because it is a lengthy text, I have sectioned it into more manageable pieces, summarizing along the way, leaving it ordered in the way I wrote it and with observer comments intertwined with trip details. While this first section qualifies as an observer comment, it provides context for the many details of organizing and conducting this field trip:

> Today was the field trip to the Saigon Market and Buddhist temple. Several times, yesterday and before leaving this morning, I thought about these visits, mostly centered upon any details I could perform in order to make the trips go more smoothly so that there were no unpleasant surprises. I wanted things to go smoothly in part because I didn't want to be embarrassed, partly because I wanted to look good and be viewed as competent and trustworthy in the eyes of my colleagues and the parents, and partly because I wanted the kids to have positive experiences and learn something outside their own culture. I didn't want any problems popping up. I viewed this trip as an exploration into another culture.

Having everything go “smoothly” was a preoccupation of mine from the outset of this field trip. The reasons that motivated me to ensure a smooth operation were of a dual origin. First, I wanted to “look good” in front all those participating. Upon reflection (and this section is indicative of the import and result of being reflective—as it is tied to being successful), I realized that I was trying to impress everyone favorably, that I had a certain amount of my pride or ego tied up in having this field trip be a big success, not just a passable experience. Second, I believed passionately in having children experience other cultures first hand, so I wanted to ensure that they had a positive experience. Examples of doing logistics and their impact follow:

> Yesterday, when my wife got home, I had her call the grocery store to confirm with the manager that 45 kids would be descending upon the establishment at about 10 am. I was relieved and glad to hear that it was "no problem." I asked my wife to act as an interpreter at the temple—again for the reasons above. I called her at work this morning to ask if she would call the temple to confirm the kids’ arrival at around 11 am. She did so and called me back to report "no problem." I was very appreciative of her quick action on this, and thought she acted in a professional manner by calling me back to report the outcome of her conversation. I planned my departure time carefully at 9:30 am to ensure that I would arrive at the grocery store well ahead of the bus—in order to talk with the manager about how to conduct the visit, and to provide a backup plan with the Vietnamese restaurant next door in case the grocery store visit finished ahead of schedule. I did this, arriving at about 9:45 am, then waited about 15-20 minutes for the bus to arrive. Before the bus arrived, I tried to get the manager to have three guides, one for each class, but she deferred to two guides. I was a little disappointed because we had originally agreed to have three guides. When the bus arrived we were ready. Two employees and I waited outside the door as Heather, Margret, Katerina, the kids and parents filed off the bus.

This section recounts the different details involved in ensuring the success of the market visit. Even though I was busy, I was very conscious of time passing, checking my watch often, always estimating and planning for more than enough time to set up things in a timely way. I didn’t want to rely on my initial set up with the market managers, thus

double-checking at several junctures in order to achieve mutual understandings. My wife also became collegial in a sense, giving me timely information that afforded me assurances and confidence in a smooth operation. I also went so far as to plan and provide a back-up plan at the nearby Vietnamese restaurant. I knew and felt how important it was to me, the teachers, and the parents that this trip was successful, and I assumed that such thoughts and feelings were experienced in the same or similar ways by the teachers. I could hardly wait to check with them to see if it was so, even before we entered the market. Once inside the market:

> I told the teachers immediately that we would have to divide into two groups and quickly explained the reason for having to do so, then I told them I would divide them into two groups as they entered the store. The first guide started to take kids and parents down an aisle toward the produce, and I counted twenty-four students for her group, then an equal number for the second guide. The main thing I focused on while at the store was not having the two groups bump into each other in the narrow aisles. As I walked back and forth from group to group, my anticipation paid off as one group headed from the meat and seafood section toward the produce section where the other group was still located. I suggested to the first guide and Margret that their group head down the aisle toward the front of the store so as not to bump into the other group, thus alleviating any snafus. One parent took a small contingent to the bathroom. Getting on the bus and heading off to the temple in time was a bit rushed. I suggested to the teachers that they could get the kids on the bus while I wrapped up with the guides.

I was somewhat directive when the bus arrived, telling the teachers how the context had changed and how I thought we should proceed to divide into two groups. At the same time I thought about how they might want to know in a timely way why two groups were needed instead of three. I also thought that they would want me to take charge in an effective way so that the visit would start smoothly, without confusion or frustration. Some of what happened at the market was not planned. There were times when I was reacting to my observations, having to think and anticipate what might

happen next, then acting upon that anticipation. I felt more pressure to perform when the bus arrived, and having to think on my feet only added to this feeling of pressure. The pressure ratcheted up another notch for me when it came time to leave. Several things were happening at the same time, and I was looking to help in as fast a way as I could, wherever I could, remembering that I wanted the bus to be on time to the temple—in order for that experience be long enough to be worthwhile for everyone. Writing in my fieldnotes, as everyone was heading for the bus:

> I recalled that the teachers had said they wanted chopsticks for the kids. Margret was looking for them, so I told her I would get a pair for each student. She also wanted lampshades. The manager looked and said they were out, so I asked her if she would mind selling one of the demos on display: "No problem," she replied. I suggested to Margret to give me the items she wanted and I would check them out so that she could get on the bus with her class in a timely way. I was looking to help the bus get rolling in order to remain on schedule as much as possible. She gave me a twenty for the items, which ended up costing about $26. She asked later how much and I told her not to worry about it. I wanted to make at least a modest contribution to the supplies they bought for the classroom—which they did from time to time. (Margret proposed this afternoon to have the parents contribute 5 to 6 dollars each toward such supplies, and Heather agreed.) After I paid for the supplies (and those of a parent so she could get on the bus with her child), I thanked the people at the grocery store and hustled to pick up my daughter at the PCS preschool before heading up to the temple.

I felt it was important to remember what the other teachers wanted, no matter how small it might seem to me (not that purchasing items for the classroom was a small thing). I also thought that I should help find a solution to purchasing the lampshades that Margret wanted, and both facilitate and contribute to purchasing classroom items. Part of my motivation was also to get the bus off in a timely fashion. Doing these things was not just a matter of "ought to," but more because I wanted to. I enjoyed helping out in a teamwork type of context because doing so made me feel good about myself. I view

teaching as a helping profession that should be extended to children, parents, and teachers, and fulfilling this view or perspective helped me, in turn, to build esteem as a teacher. Lastly, I wanted to represent PCS well by thanking the market guides, and to carry out my role in a professional manner in the process of doing so. After rushing to pick up my daughter:

> I arrived at the temple just as the bus and parents' vehicles were pulling into the parking lot of the temple. My wife arrived early at about 11 am to talk the visit over with the head monk and help out with translation from Vietnamese to English. The teachers took their respective classes to the front courtyard of the temple to make drawings of the temple with the use of their clipboards. The parents were coordinated by the teachers and asked to take small groups of about five students into the temple. Heather addressed the whole group, asking everyone to be quiet and respect the temple once inside.

When I surveyed how the three classes were organized for drawing pictures and looking inside the temple, I thought: "No one sees the level of detail at which these teachers work together." Now in their second year, the details of conducting a field trip were almost rote for the teachers with each teacher keeping an eye on all forty-eight students, getting all three groups and their clipboards off the bus and over to the temple courtyard (one teacher responsible for loading and unloading all the clipboards), having periodic eye contact with each other, coordinating with parents to have them perform "do-able" tasks, and one teacher addressing the whole group while the other two monitored behavior.

> When the visit was almost over I headed over to the school and noticed that parent vehicles were already waiting in line in the parking lot to pick up their kids [Friday was a half day], half an hour ahead of time. They were obstructing any chance for the bus to park and unload the children in its usual spot. I quickly parked my truck and went inside, but I couldn't find any administrators to help me. I decided to just take things into my own hands, going to the back door to see if I could guide the bus to a safe unloading point in the back parking lot. By the

> time I walked through a crowd of students to the back door, the bus driver had already found a spot and the kids were just streaming through the backdoor of the school.

Even though I was finished with the field trip, I saw that more help was needed. It was then when I realized that these teachers were almost constantly looking to help each other out, whether in regard to the situation at hand or with each other directly. Not knowing what was acceptable as far as where the bus could unload students, I sought advice from the administration. Unsuccessful in finding an administrator, I still took the initiative to unload the bus. I thought it could be accomplished safely in the rear parking lot, though I was too late. I was relieved to have that detail already accomplished by the bus driver. After eating lunch and getting students into the appropriate vehicle:

> It was soon proposed by Heather and agreed upon by marketing Katerina to go get a “to-go” lunch somewhere. After about five minutes of talking with parents and putting things away, Margret invited me to join them for lunch and off we went as a group in her vehicle. On the way back from lunch I asked them: "So, what did you think about how things went on the field trip, collaboratively speaking?" Margret quickly spoke up: "Flexibility—I think everyone was very flexible."
> "I liked having the two store people standing outside waiting for us—that was very nice,” Heather added.

I didn’t have time to follow up on these comments until the following Monday. My last observer comment was like a summative evaluation of the market experience:

> Overall, I thought the visits went well, partly because the sites were so new and unusual to everyone, and probably because the guides at both places were so nice to us. I also thought during the trip: I wished I had taken more time to talk with the teachers about more of the specifics. It seemed like I could have worked with them on more of the details, at least informing them better about how things would unfold at the market. I also thought the teachers and parents improvised quite well, like noticing the quiet voices of the guides and taking the initiative to rephrase what the guides had said so that everyone could hear better.

This field trip exemplified the reliance on teamwork that the teachers and I had evolved over time. The teachers had relied upon me to plan and facilitate the market portion of this trip. Planning this trip was as much responsibility as the teachers granted me in the course of this study. While they were a bit nervous about doing so, they trusted me, in large measure, to figure out the appropriate details and to follow through where necessary in order to provide a quality experience for everyone. They agreed that the amount of detail that I shared before the trip was sufficient and typical of their past experience in planning field trips. They assumed that not all details could be foreseen, yet one should forecast and attend to major details ahead of time. Thus, they relied upon a certain amount of improvisation during any field trip in order to "make it go smoothly."

"Big Group": An Improvisational Presentation

Margret described how they had winnowed down large group gatherings to one main area of joint presentation, a daily improvisation during what became known toward the end of their first year as "Big Group." She described the reduction of their joint presentations: "Slowly but surely what we've really done is, our classes are pretty much unto ourselves except for Lifeskills when we come together." The teaching mode for the Big Group presentations was best described by everyone as improvisational. One teacher, Ms. James, had some experience improvising within a collaborative context. Usually, "Heather has something in mind for Big Group," Katerina said. Hearing this, Heather laughed and added: "Sometimes!" Initially, Heather had described to Margret and Katerina her successful experience of team teaching and improvisation with a fellow grade 3-4 teacher at her previous school:

> One of the beauties I saw with teaching that way is that you could discuss things out-loud like a play. The children, like the audience, could see something acted out that a teacher alone cannot do. You know, you can't act all the parts and see the dynamic and do the, you know, good-cop bad-cop, this is what happens when you try this and that. There's just no dynamic there! It's all lecture style – you can't play off, and they can't see, but one of the neat things is that we could set it up to put on little performances.

Originally, in order "to make it [teaching] easier for us," Heather's plan for an improvisational presentation involved combining the three classes and:

> having one person tell a story and the other person crowd control with the kids that have a problem, and another person going off because there's so much testing involved when you individualize. You need time to do that when you don't have five or six other kids going Miss James, Miss James, Miss James, [laughing] tugging on your sleeve. But when we tried that at the beginning of the year it was clear the children were not ready [laughing]. It was just too hard to get them all together.

However, reducing the number of large group gatherings seemed to work better. Instead of trying three different times during the day, "what did work was to just do that once in a day," keeping the one after the lunch recess. This quickly became known as "The Show," and toward the end of their first year as "Big Group." Heather described Big Group: "That's the one where we talked about the Lifeskills and we act out the Lifeskills. We put on hats and we become performers, and the children just love it. So that was a real keeper. It's just sort of a dynamic way of getting that communication across." Soon they added different content to doing Lifeskills during Big Group, like Mystery Animal and Timeline Tuesday, which had an historical theme to it.

Undertaken since the first day of school, Heather described their improv performances for Lifeskills during Big Group: "They don't know – I mean we don't rehearse the scene ahead of time so it's really fun and it's comedic—kinda fun seeing

how we work together. It's like an improv comedy group." In a hushed character voice, Heather described the last minute assignment of roles and the general workings of their improv: "OK, you be the guy and we're gonna show this – OK go [laughing]," and that "we just create a scene in front of them, but we don't know what it's going to be like exactly. We do the point we want to make and so each brings their own sense of performance to it." She maintained that each teacher has a different role in a performance, and described their improvisational process: "What's neat is that I know what the Lifeskill is, and I kinda have an idea of what I want to come across and what situation to illustrate. But I'm telling them right then and there (laughs), and they're going with it." Heather then added a compliment about Margret and Katerina, and how the improv impacted their collaboration: "They are so beautiful about it, and that's just a fun illustration of our collaboration to me—to have fun with it."

Katerina described what the Big Group presentation was like for her:

> I never have any clue what I'm going to do until Margret or Heather say: "And you're going to do this." "Okay." Like today we did the Pledge of Allegiance and I said I have this book and Margret said, "So are you going to read it?" I'm like: "Yeah, I guess." All right, so I read it to the kids. And then I got a hat from Heather and she said: "Well, you're going to be the cupids arrow and we're . . ." "All right, all right, I can do that." It's really like yeah, there's nothing really planned until we start at 12:00. So until 11:59, I have no clue, not knowing what we're going to do for a half hour.

She said that she would just arrive on the scene, and: "I get my hat and I get told what I'm going to do, what character I am, and then start," and added: "I never thought I could do this." Katerina became used to taking suggestions from Heather and Margret for their role play. When not a part of the presentation, she would usually stand or walk around to keep an eye on student behavior, leaning over to quietly correct or redirect children in

low tones. Occasionally she would take one of her students aside to discuss something with him or her.

Their improv did not require training, yet specific qualities seemed desirable. Like Margret and Katerina, Heather confirmed that she didn't have improv training, adding,"but we all have a little bit of the ham in us, and there is a certain level of intuitiveness that we are on a good plane there." She confirmed that during improv it was important to pay close attention to each other and to "say yes" to whatever the other teacher offered. She also confirmed that it was important for each teacher in the improv to be "non-judgmental, very trusting, very creative," and to have "a little bit of fun thrown in there." Overall, she considered the improv to be "very enjoyable." For Heather, the improvisational performances were symbolic of their collaboration: "We're all in the position of 'yes' – we're not saying a thing's impossible – we're not saying: 'I don't do it that way – that doesn't work for me.' It's like: 'Okay, we'll try it.'"

Learning Centers

One of the areas for collaboration, especially at the beginning of each school year and before the start of each bloc, was the common area dedicated to the learning centers for all three classes. Principal Towson confirmed that the teachers were the ones who decided to reorganize the classroom with common learning centers. Heather talked about her vision and the evolution of the learning centers:

> I remember visualizing it independently and picturing how it could be in this space, but I wouldn't say that it was all my idea. I mean there are just obvious things – you have blocs for kinder – and that we agreed on all those things – once I had figured out: this is where we can put all the art stuff and this is where I visualize this being and this is where we put bookcases here and we have a little cordoned off area for the pretend place.

Much of the teachers' work on their learning centers was carried out during their daily joint planning period. Principal Towson described his view of their planning time: "They have eighty minutes daily that they use every second of." Heather recalled that in her first year they didn't have such a joint planning time, and that now, "we just prize that." She claimed that this planning time, a result of scheduling the "specials" teachers to work with the children, was what made teaching at PCS most attractive to her.

Half way through their first year, Heather talked about how the teachers were still organizing some of the common areas of the classroom, in this instance, cupboards and learning centers. She admitted, "we really don't have things put away the way we want 'em even now, so everything feels temporary still as far as how we want things set up and where things really should be [laughing]." The teachers had requested an extensive cupboard storage system, which the administration had approved, "so we're just kinda puttin' up with a lot of stuff now," Heather opined, until the cupboards were finished. She felt that "we could make the art center better," so she went and put in some of her art supplies. According to her, "everybody just kinda does that. They see something and they have something, they put it in and we all appreciate it." According to Principal Towson, the three teachers confronted the design and intention of the K-1 classroom, and "really invested energy and time upfront figuring out: "How can we configure this? How can we make this work best for the kids, not necessarily for us. So it was an efficiency model as well as a best practices model." Mr. Towson thought that "they've just done a phenomenal job of reorganizing the room", including "structurally changing the environment with new tables."

Heather talked about what they intended to do with the classroom. She wanted to make sure that setting up the learning centers became a shared responsibility among the three of them, noting that: " I think we're getting that direction of establishing, sharing that responsibility." She said that after the first five months of being together, "it's been, if you have time, do something to make it better (laughing]." Unfortunately, Heather explained: "We haven't really used the centers area as well as it could be or put as much time in it, 'cause we're learning so many things about how to teach kids reading, writing and math, and that's taken precedence so far." She outlined what they intended to do with the classroom:

> I think in our fine-tuning we're going in the direction of getting our procedures in order, getting where things are, how that all makes sense for all of us, [organizing] optimal space, and getting it attractive. So right now, this is the best we can do with the time that we have and the things that we have, but we can see it better.

The teachers continued to work on and alter the content of the learning centers, not just before each bloc in relation to a chosen theme, but also by designing completely new learning centers in different parts of the classroom. For example, before the start of their second year, they shifted the listening/reading center to the other side of the classroom, in between Heather's and Katerina's classrooms, upgrading it with a couch, two tables, and book shelves. It became a more inviting, self-contained area that the kids seemed to enjoy more than before. After a few blocs, working on the learning centers became a proficient, ritualized part of their collaboration. Like many other aspects of their curriculum and instruction, the teachers were striving periodically to make their learning centers better.

Parent Letter: A Critical Incident

The teachers ended up working on the weekly parent letter in one of two ways. Stuffed into the children's take-home folders on Friday, they typically took turns composing this letter in a solitary fashion on a computer at home either Thursday evening or early Friday morning before coming to school. Prior to composing at the computer, each teacher would ask the other two teachers at various times during the week for items to include in the letter, sometimes jotting these down on most any spare piece of paper. Less often, they worked together at the computer next to Heather's class area. These were usually times when they wanted to get the letter finished early in order to let the parents know of an event or a need in a timely manner. During the two times I observed them jointly composing the parent letter, Katerina would sit intently at the keyboard, while Margret and Heather alternately leaned over Katerina's shoulders, straining to see and keep up with the text she had entered, then stand to look up and think of what the next piece of text should be. These actions were repeated several times as they composed the letter.

On one such afternoon midway through their second year, they gathered in this fashion to work on Margret's letter. After talking about the rainy day forecast for their field trip the following day (Thursday), they decided quickly to send home the Friday parent letter two days early (Wednesday). This letter would let parents know that the Thursday field trip to the farm was cancelled. It was late in their planning period toward the end of the school day, and the children were due back from their specials any minute. The teachers appeared especially intent and focused as they composed the

last few sentences. Margret was waggling a pen in her hand, while Heather stood, arms crossed, both offering words and phrases for the remaining sentences of the letter. While sitting a few feet away at one of Heather's tables, I offered a phrase about the playground maintenance day, which Heather and Margret repeated, telling Katerina to add it to the letter. Margret stayed hunched over Katerina's right shoulder in order to see her add this phrase, while Heather straightened up and folded her arms, still keeping her gaze on the computer screen. Katerina also offered ideas, though less frequently, as she mostly keyed in the words, repeating verbally what the other two had said.

Margret looked up to see the clock quickly approaching 3:15 pm, knowing that all three of their classes would soon come pouring through the classroom door. Seldom were the teachers caught next to a deadline for finishing a project. They hurriedly put the final touches on the letter, and Katerina then commanded the printer to print. As soon as the printer finished, Margret grabbed the parent letter and ran to the teacher work room to copy enough letters for all three classes. Within 90 seconds she raced back into the classroom and gave Heather and Katerina their copies. In the meantime, I saw Katerina peering into the computer screen trying to find the just completed parent letter, but Margret had closed the file without saving it. I jumped in to help and we tried various steps to find the parent letter, but to no avail.

After the letter had been brought back by Margret, I offered to help with anything they needed. Katerina immediately asked me to help her slip the parent letter into her students' take-home folders that were placed at each of her students' assigned

seats. One of her parents also jumped in to stuff various items into the take-home folders. After finishing Katerina's folders, I went over and started to help Margret with her letters. (As I walked over I looked left to Heather who had already finished stuffing her take-home folders.) Instead of putting them into a plastic take-home folder, Margret had already hole-punched her parent letters so she could put them in the back of a special red folder. Each folder required that three pliable metal clips be folder together so as to permit the holes in the letter's margin to slide over the clips. While her students were hovering, waiting for their respective folders so that they could go together to wait beneath the parking lot canopy for parents to pick them up, Margret asked me: "Let's see, how can we split this job efficiently?" With no immediate answer from me, she asked: "How 'bout if I fold all the clips together and you put in the letter?"

"Alright," I replied. "Let's do it."

Kneeling on the floor, we proceeded to set our hands and fingers flying, trying to finish as fast as possible. She finished folding the clips together far ahead of my task, so she then joined my task, slipping the letters on and folding the clips back down to hold each letter. It took us about two minutes to finish the folders, then we quickly handed them to each student. Because I thought that Margret would need additional time to organize the folders and her students, I had suggested to Margret a couple of minutes earlier that I do her outside duty (loading students into cars), so that she could attend to her class. "Could you do that for me?" she asked.

"No problem," I replied.

"Bless your heart. That would be great, Jim. Thanks for doing that,"

While Margret finished handing out the red folders, I told her, almost in a whisper, that I was heading out to the parking lot. She nodded her head up and down as she called out student names and handed out the remaining folders. The letter would provide timely information to the parents that the next day's field trip to a farm was "cancelled due to the rain showers forecast for Thursday."

In this instance, they had made an exception to their routine of taking turns to compose the parent letter. Without reservation, Heather and Katerina pitched in to help Margret complete her turn at the letter in a more timely fashion. They were engaged in one of many times when it was important to do a task that served their goal of delivering a "quality experience" for parents and students alike. They also figured that doing so would afford them time to prepare for other lessons, rather than trying to throw something together at the last minute for that Thursday's class. Doing the parent letter ahead of time was a caring thing to do. They had decided to give advance notice to both students (verbally that afternoon) and parents (via the letter), reasoning that such notice would help avoid disappointments and allow the parents who were volunteering for the field trip to reschedule their Thursday morning.

As a researcher, I was always on the prowl for a "critical incident" (Erlandson, et al., 1993, p. 103), or a time that appeared to encapsulate or symbolize significant aspects of the phenomenon under study. The critical incident above represented a situation when the teachers were under more than the usual pressure. Choosing to spotlight their work on the parent letter was premised, in this case, on my belief that such instances would test the teachers' collaborative mettle and tend to reveal more

readily the strengths and weaknesses of their collaborative process. In the twenty-five minutes that it took to write and place the letters into folders, the teachers had shown that they could work together under pressure—gracefully so. Like many of their joint efforts, however, work on the parent letter was marked by what didn't take place. For example, even while under pressure, they didn't "get snippy," or short with each other, didn't act out any passive-aggressive behaviors like "tuning out" or withholding contributions, didn't make serious innuendos or use invective sarcasm, and they didn't get overly directive or authoritative with one another. Instead, they remained courteous and respectful, looking to help and contribute to the production of the parent letter.

Describing Teacher Collaboration

My aim in this section is to grant primacy to the teachers' thoughts about how they worked together. My intention here and at other points in the text was to make sure that each teacher and the teachers as a group were represented accurately and authentically. By carefully member-checking (with all three teachers) an individual's thoughts, particularly for the following section, I felt not only confident but obliged in many instances to use the term "they." Doing so made for an accurate representation of their consensual thinking, or joint construction of the description and analysis. While I was an insider and include myself as a part of such construction, I nonetheless retained an outsider status, never considered by these three as a full-fledged teacher.

The teachers seemed to be well aware of the direction or goal of their collaboration. Katerina voiced how their goal was "to do a better job" with the K-1

program, “because if you don’t collaborate, you’re not doing as good of a job as you could do.” Margret then added,

“To make the K-1 program,” she began, then finishing almost simultaneously with Heather: “something we could be proud of.” They had made a mutual assumption, revealed in their individual interviews, that their purpose was to deliver “as high a quality curriculum as we could,” Katerina remembered. They agreed that having such a defined, mutual goal was part of what motivated them to work together.

At two points in my generation of data, the beginning and end, I asked the teachers a question that elicited both their description and analysis: “How is your collaboration different from other interactions?” In the beginning, Katerina described a non-example of collaboration: “An interaction is more like when I do [reading] buddies with Ms. Carson [a grade 4-5 teacher], but I don’t collaborate with her.” She then gave an example of how she looked at their collaboration: “To collaborate is more to work together to set the curriculum or the Lifeskills show together.”

Well into the second half of their second year together, Margret thought about the half day she spent as a solitary substitute teacher with a 4-5 class, exclaiming: “It was a whole different thing being in there by yourself. I was glad to come back to ‘where everyone knows your name,’” referring to the tagline of a TV sitcom, “Cheers.” She thought the reason why their collaboration worked so well started with the environment, the open room, “saying it [collaboration] loud and clear.” Similarly, Heather figured that they were fitting into the PCS scheme of things, especially because ITI was in the

school's charter, and because PCS voiced and embodied the expectation that students should have extraordinary experiences from extraordinary teachers.

According to the teachers, their ability to work in harmony arose vis-à-vis their particular mix of personalities; that they were, Margret believed, "people persons," and that they each had "a willingness," Heather said, to work together. "And nobody has such a strong mind that it's either her way or the highway," added Katerina, noting that it didn't matter to them whose idea was eventually implemented. Heather added that this collaboration helped her to enjoy coming to work, and that having an affinity for teaching had become important to her over the years.

Changes over Time

The teachers also addressed how they believed their collaboration to have changed from the beginning. "I think we're more efficient in how we use our time," Heather began. "We can kinda predict somebody's reaction to a particular situation."

"We're better at mind-reading, too," Margret chimed in. "We know each other more, whereas before we were: 'Is that alright with you?'"

"And now we're just assuming it's gonna be fine," Katerina pointed out.

Margret added: "I think we're able to speak our minds a little bit better now."

I asked them on a scale of one to ten how much time they spent in collaboration when comparing their second year to the first, where a ten was "basically the same as last year." Heather answered with a "seven."

"There's always gonna be at least a certain level, like a five," Margret said.

"Plus we desire it. A lot of our collaboration might not be necessary, but we seek it out," Heather added.

"It just makes this job fun," Katerina emphasized.

The teachers thought their collaboration had changed after the first year. "The difference this year, is that we're not needy," Margret thought. "Last year we were needy in many ways—emotionally, we all had tough classes. We spent a lot of time sharing stories about our kids and trying to figure out how to work with them." They thought this was partly a function of being in a multi-age classroom when a first-year teacher doesn't know any of the students, and the second year and thereafter, when the teacher knows all the returning students, which in the K-1 room was usually about half of the sixteen students. Heather pointed out that each teacher was different in the way they approached the various pieces of the PCS curriculum, like LN: "We like to hear: 'What are you doing that works? – I want to incorporate some of that, but I really enjoy this.' That's becoming clearer as time goes on – there are differences in the way we see things." Heather outlined what she perceived as the three main differences between her first year and this year: (1) the kids seemed to be less problematic in terms of their behavior and academic prowess, (2) there was one less group of students thereby creating more room for common areas, and that (3) this year "we work better as a team."

Heather also thought a couple of developments had taken place in the way they were able to work together:

> There's more of an understanding already set in place based on past experience. There's a shorthand in our communicating, and less ambiguity that you have to straighten out, instead of: "Is this what you mean?" And I think last year for them, because it was their first year to teach K-1 and in that situation, and now all

> those things are knowns instead of unknowns. So they went through a big learning curve last year that they're not having to do this year.

The teachers were able to note how their collaboration was different the second year and thought, therefore, that it had become more efficient after struggling through the first year.

Levels of Collaboration

Heather also thought about the importance of structural differences in the way the teachers worked together. Unprompted by a specific question, Heather brought up an aspect of teacher collaboration that she described with some enthusiasm as "kinda fun because it's on different levels." She explained this fun and some of the benefits of having different levels of collaboration:

> The whole day seems to be interspersed with different levels, so I think that's one of the things that make it [collaboration] work. It'd be exhausting to have to do that level all the time and it's also exhausting to be autonomous in that space, to do everything by yourself, so it's nice to have those moments in the day where you have that different dynamic. It refreshes you and also helps you do your own thing and you don't feel overwhelmed by their presence like: "go away!" Like I was telling one of my kids today, it could be too much togetherness! [laughing]

Heather explained what she viewed as the different levels of their collaboration in terms of relative intensity:

> There's a gradiated scale it seems and the improv seems to be the more intense value of what it's like to collaborate. When we're doing our literacy in our classrooms by ourselves it's more on the polar end of that continuum because we'll approach it the way we see LN and that's not necessarily exactly the same.

She further described her thinking regarding the intense, improvisational part of their relationship, in comparison to teaching in one's own class area:

> In any relationship where it's real intense, where you're all sharing the same kids and doing the same skit, for example, and you're all in the same scene--it's an

> intense kind of collaboration, whereas when we're with our own group teaching literacy you're aware of the other people, they are doing something similar, but you're not really collaborating so much with them.

Describing such levels of collaboration points to the refined way in which they perceived their practice of teacher collaboration, including how they considered and interacted in varying ways to support their teacher collaboration.

Section Summary

Figuring out how they would enact the various pieces of their joint-curriculum was an important and involved part of the teachers' collaboration. As they discussed ideas, the teachers were striving to deliver a successful, "fine-tuned," and "smoothly" operated K-1 program. Teamwork was a vital part of achieving success, especially as they conducted their improvisation during "Big Group." Here they would demonstrate great flexibility, "saying yes" to almost any offer, in this way moving their improvisation forward. Such improvisation highlighted the fun they had working together. While improvising was fun, it was also intense, and the teachers balanced out such intensity with more relaxed ways of figuring out their other curriculum areas, and they could always take refuge in returning to teach their individual classes. Such a breadth of experience became a way for the teachers to balance out their hectic, pressure-filled setting. After all, being in a fish bowl, perpetually "looking to help" one another, and following through on their respective collaborative tasks, were all energy consuming activities. In their work together they felt an urgency to move quickly toward a personal and professional harmony, even arranging for a yoga instructor the second year to guide them each Wednesday afternoon in pursuit of such harmony.

Discussing and implementing their curriculum and instruction saw a certain amount of growth take place from the first to the second year. After all, the teachers practiced working together on a daily basis, often with great engagement and intensity. Their classroom promoted collaboration. Their relatively high degree of engagement, compared to other teacher collaborations I've observed over the years (where teachers were located in adjacent classrooms, or "pods"), was facilitated by being in one large classroom and by investing themselves in what Little (1990) terms, "joint work" (p. 509), in relation to specific areas of their curriculum and instruction. Maintaining such engagement also required a certain kind of support.

Part E: Supporting Teacher Collaboration

Each teacher looked to help the other teacher in a variety of circumstances. Once, when I substituted for Katerina, Margret was conducting Big Group and I was stage left looking to redirect any errant behaviors. Suddenly, Margret stopped addressing the group to stop a student from getting a drink of water, then moments later corrected another student. Both of these students were in my class and seated only a few feet away from me. After school that day I apologized to Margret for not acting upon those two behaviors. I observed this "looking to help" dynamic on several occasions with each teacher. Three pairs of eyes constantly supervised the joint group of students, whether in Big Group, during recess, or on field trips and other situations, looking to guide behavior, provide instruction, or offer a compliment to any student. Several advantages seemed to accrue for the teachers as they worked together in the same classroom. As Margret described one advantage: "Any problems or whatever, we always have each

other to go to or to say: 'Well, what math problem are you doing?' or even: 'What graph question are you doing today?'"

Once, because Katerina had missed both the literacy and numeracy trainings, Heather lent Katerina her textbooks from these trainings. Heather knew that Katerina and Margret were frustrated at times, imagining their thoughts to be something like: "Oh, this isn't working the way I want it to, and I don't know how to make it better." She would share with Katerina and Margret: "This is what I did last year, and this is what I liked, and this is what I'm gonna try this year, but I don't know that that's the best way. I want to see what it's like."

Instead of having only two teachers in this same classroom, and a third K-1 teacher in a separate classroom, Margret explained why she liked the team aspect of having three classes in one classroom:

> I think it was a good decision to keep us all together, not to have one person off, because right there you have a team. When you have a team, we know exactly what the other person's dealing with, we know all the kids well. If one person had been off and over, there's a separation. I think being just underfoot and under each other's influence was the right thing. It works beautifully.

She added, referring to the number of teachers in this classroom during the previous year, that "four would just be horrendous."

Making Things "Lighter"

All three teachers believed that a sense of humor played an essential role in the success of their collaboration. From the beginning and throughout my time with them, it never failed that one or more of them would giggle or burst out laughing. I made sure to bracket such laughter in my transcripts as a way of warranting their good humor. It

wasn't long before they replaced formalities with an informal way of relating to each other. After a couple of weeks into their first year, Margret felt she no longer needed to be as cautious in relating to Heather and Katerina. Half way through the year, Margret asserted: "We're much more apt to tease each other," adding that Katerina would tease her "about whatever in a joking way." Margret explained one source of their teasing: "If I'm being a little bit too anal about something, you know, they might tease me. You know that it's always done in a good-natured way." An example of teasing occurred early their first year when Katerina thought that the magenta coded books were pronounced "manure." This soon became somewhat ritualized by Heather, and Margret as they would ask Katerina periodically for the "manure" books. Or Katerina would tease Margret about being "bossy." Even though it wasn't true in toto, there may have been a grain of truth. Such teasing allowed the teachers to communicate important messages in a safe, acceptable way—a way that made things "lighter," or situated such communication in a vein of light heartedness and fun.

Support from Administration

The PCS administration supported the three K-1 teachers in several ways that were typical of the support provided to all teachers at the school. The Instructional Coordinator, Linda Mallory, would come in periodically to help, in particular, Katerina and Margret the first year, because they were new to the PCS literacy and math curricula. From observing and talking with Katerina and Margret, Heather knew they felt much better after working with Linda. Linda, in working hands-on with their students, was able to model for the teachers the types of questions so important for

CGI. Heather described Linda: "She's just brilliant. She sees ways to solve the problems that they're having, 'cause she's seeing the problems right as they're happening," and Katerina and Margret would respond on such occasions with: "Aaah, that's what I needed!" Heather thought that Linda's help was quite valuable, "'cause that was a big stressor – how to make that math time work, and having her come in and shed some light made their lives so much better in a way I couldn't have."

"The nice thing about PCS is that they do have these set philosophies," Margret said in reference to ITI, CGI, LN, and RCB (Redirecting Children's Behavior), otherwise: "We'd have to collaborate a lot more."

"It's very clear what you have to do," Katerina said about PCS's "non-negotiable" curricula. Having clear, common curricula, especially ones that emphasized individualized student-centered learning, along with support from the Instructional Coordinator, helped the teachers to facilitate a reduction in the amount of collaboration than might otherwise be needed in a more group-oriented, more teacher-centered curriculum.

Section Summary

Of special note was how the teachers interfaced with the school. For instance, when they felt strongly enough that their classroom needed something, they would write a joint memo or visit the appropriate administrator as a trio. Such an alliance may have brought about a type of collective pressure to which the administration responded more readily than they might have with individual teachers. Or, as we've already seen, the administration was enthusiastic about their collaboration and may have been responding

accordingly. Regardless, other than the typical types of support that PCS afforded all of its teachers, the K-1 teachers didn't receive special support or additional resources from the administration.

Chapter Summary

Without more than the usual type or amount of support from the school's administration, and with only limited experience in collaboration, Heather , Margret, and Katerina made some important decisions about teaching in a shared classroom when they first came together. While the three teachers could have chosen to develop their own traditional, autonomous ways (like the teachers did the year before), they decided instead to commit to and practice collaboration. They showed great dexterity and flexibility as they launched their K-1 program. Immediately, they started to "hash things out," showed great willingness to jump in and help one another, and set a "we" tone for working together, as in their typical question that started with: "What should we do with . . . ?"

Desirous of having their classroom run smoothly—as soon as possible—they had to figure out what to work on and how to go about it. They decided early on that each teacher would be responsible not just for her own students, but for all the students in the classroom. Three teachers would jointly supervise and manage behavior or compliment students. Together they planned the thematic content and details of their curriculum, including seven, periodically changing learning centers. They took advantage of an economy of scale, alternating responsibility for planning a weekly field trip, supervising recess and lunchtime, and writing a weekly parent letter, among other shared duties. At mid-day they would gather all three classes and conduct an improvisational presentation

on Lifeskills, a person or event in history, a mystery animal, and so on, while their children either sat spell-bound or actively participated. They would come in on their own time before each of four blocs, spending a day or two to plan themes and activities that were integrated and attuned to state guidelines.

Roles and relationships were vital to the teachers' collaboration. Developing complementary roles from their strengths was an important way in which the teachers' moved their collaboration toward harmony. We see Heather and Margret defaulting to and gaining from Katerina's technological prowess. Katerina benefited in many ways from Heather's and Margret's experience and mentorship. Margret's drive to have their curriculum make sense in every way was balanced on occasion with Heather's "governor" role, questioning or guiding ideas and plans toward perhaps more "do-able" lessons, while Heather benefited from fresh ideas and new approaches to curriculum. Their relationship went beyond having rapport to that of deeply caring "sisters," and having a sense of family. They key qualities of personality, intelligence, perspective-taking, and the ability to "sense" each others needs were also important contributors to their harmonious relationship.

While in the previous chapter Heather had conceived of making their decision-making process an egalitarian exercise of power, in this chapter the teachers are actually exercising power. Heather, Margret, and Katerina had to decide their first year, both individually and as a group, how they would approach decision-making in a multi-class, multi-grade, ITI, individualized teaching context. Initially, Heather was the "mutually accepted leader," despite her attempts at empowerment and equal power in decision-

making. Margret and Katerina were new to PCS, and the amount they needed to learn about their new context was daunting. This status was even more true for Katerina as an inductee to teaching. Margret and Katerina trusted and endorsed Heather's vision for the K-1 program, gradually adding more input as the school year progressed.

Power shifted the second year. For much of the first year, Heather, and soon Margret, had been like mentors to Katerina. Thus, Katerina was not in a position that bequeathed her much power. She mostly listened, observed carefully, and occasionally reacted to Heather's and Margret's ideas. The second year, they became more like "mutual mentors," and in this way began a shift toward a more horizontal, egalitarian exercise of power as they made decisions about how to deliver their curriculum. Still, Heather's experience and role as an occasional "governor" of the idea process afforded her more power. Margret's experience and passion about "making everything fit" afforded her more of a say in decision-making, while Katerina did better the second year at adding her ideas to the delivery of curriculum, though still not to the same extent as Heather or Margret.

Finally, time was an important consideration to the teachers. Their average daily time in collaboration was 130 minutes per day, most of which was doing tasks together (47 min/day), followed by generating and planning ideas (30 min/day), engaging in familial collegiality (22 min/day), conducting Big Group (20 min/day), and doing tasks separately (11 min/day). Looking at their collaboration in terms of a task orientation vs. a relational orientation, their time was approximately five to one (task to relational oriented activities). Such time invested in collaborative activities resulted in a curriculum and

method of instruction that, at least in their eyes, far surpassed what they could have accomplished individually.

In the discussion that follows, my aim is to portray the findings and conclusions of this teacher collaboration: who these teachers were and the roles they played, their choices and the predominant processes they used, and the contextual features that surrounded these three teachers. The categories I use are joint constructions, whose facilitation came mostly from me. Whenever prudent, in order to clarify and elaborate upon these categories, I have extended the analysis to include additional perspectives and practices of the teachers from other data generated during my inquiry.

CHAPTER SIX

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

"The shrewd guess, the fertile hypothesis, the courageous leap to a tentative conclusion—these are the most valuable coin of the thinker at work."

--Jerome Bruner

After providing a portrayal of their teacher collaboration, I turn now to make greater sense out of my descriptive analysis. In doing so, my commitment is to remain connected with the data, and at the same time pursue Bruner's dictum above. In the first section below I state and attempt to warrant the findings from this inquiry. This is followed by my conclusions, implications for practice, study limitations, directions for further research, and a final summary. Each section draws upon relevant theory as a way to situate and explain my findings and conclusions.

The purpose of generating and analyzing the data reported in this paper was to seek and better understand how three elementary teachers founded and practiced their teacher collaboration. The findings below, while drawn from the previous two chapters of description, represent a higher level of analytic abstraction. While drawing upon warrants via the data, such analysis is aimed at addressing the research questions vis-à-vis interactions with initial definitions of the phenomenon and working hypotheses.

Findings

After revisiting the previous descriptions and looking for patterns, or recurrent traits and features characteristic of the teachers and their collaboration, I formulated the following twenty-one findings (which, in naturalistic inquiry, might also be considered as working hypotheses for future research). Such findings are aimed at making greater sense

of the data, as well as to provide avenues for further research (more specifically specified in the last section). They are organized and in response to my two research questions: (1) "How did this teacher collaboration appear to be founded?" and (2) "How did these three teachers appear to practice their collaboration?" (Those findings marked with a 1 or 2 refer to research questions 1 and 2, respectively, while those marked with a 3 relate to both research questions.) Rather than being prescriptive, my aim in presenting these findings is to induce the key patterns that appeared to facilitate the founding and practice of the teacher's collaboration, as well as those patterns not apparent (at least not in great abundance). While the previous description could afford a multitude of findings, my emphasis below is on those findings that appeared to have the greatest saliency and meaning in relation to the teachers' collaboration.

In addition, these findings also relate to my hypotheses presented in Chapter One. This approach is both consistent with the emergent design of naturalistic inquiry and congruent with my grand tour question: "How do people come together and work together in the same space?" Moreover, while my findings relate to my case study data, they are not intended as generalizations to other contexts. My hope is that such findings will be cause for reflection by all parties, including those readers who may transfer these understandings to other settings. These findings, in turn, lead to my conclusions as well as the forming of a gestalt and metaphor that represent a unified conceptualization of this teacher collaboration.

Question #1: "How did this teacher collaboration appear to be founded?"

1.1 Founding teacher collaboration was facilitated by the teachers' willingness to work together.

Such willingness was important to Heather from the beginning. In order to obtain a strong indication of willingness to work together, Heather offered a choice to both Margret and Katerina in their separate job interviews: "Would you prefer a classroom of your own, or would you prefer to work together in this classroom?" Both Margret's and Katerina's responses were almost an immediate and unqualified, "Yes," to working with Heather in the large K-1 classroom at the new campus (they didn't even see the setting at the original campus). Such willingness was also reinforced several times by Margret and Katerina, typically commenting about how nice it was to work together in this classroom as compared to teaching in an isolated classroom. Malone, Gallagher, and Long (2001), though in a context of one general education teaming with a special education teacher, also found that it was important for many teachers to have a willingness to work together.

1.2 In comparison to their practice of collaboration, founding teacher collaboration took very little face-to-face time.

If "founding" is a stage or precursor to the practice of teacher collaboration, it didn't take much time to do so when compared to their practice. Specifically, the teachers didn't require much time to become familiar with each other. Of the three teachers, Heather had the most time to become familiar with her co-teachers. She had met Katerina in the context of her substitute teaching at PCS, and Margret during their summer trainings. Prior to working together on their classroom and curriculum, Heather's

conversation and discussion time with both teachers totaled under five hours. Her observation time of both teachers (in particular, Katerina), though difficult to estimate, was probably around 20 hours. For Heather, there was sufficient time to start feeling confident that Katerina could "handle" the K-1 age group in this setting. Katerina, likewise, had about as much time to become familiar with Heather, though Katerina and Margret didn't meet until the first day they started working together. While Heather had met Katerina and Margret in mid-May of 2002, two months before they started working together in July, the three of them didn't need much time together in order to start their practice of teacher collaboration. (Findings about the founding of this teacher collaboration continue below with those marked "3," because they overlap with the teachers' practice.)

Question #2: "How did these three teachers appear to practice their collaboration?"

2.1 The teachers shared key "personality" traits (in this case defined as including process traits) and values that helped them to facilitate a long-term collaboration.

All three teachers identified the almost absolute importance of sharing key personality traits and values in order to facilitate their collaboration. From the start they talked about, and through my observations and participation I verified, how important "personality" and having similar "teaching philosophies" were to facilitating their working relationship. They described several traits as being "most important," namely, being "flexible," or "willing to accept other ideas" and "open to trying new ideas," "passionate about ideas," "respectful," "empathetic," "emotionally supportive," able to "go with the flow," having a "team player attitude," being conscientious, or "looking to

help one another" and "following through," "accepting" of each other, including each others idiosyncrasies, "playful and a good sense of humor," and "checking their egos at the door." This is a much longer, more involved list than that derived from a study that used the "Team Process Perception Survey" (Malone, Gallagher, Long, 2001). In their study, a majority of general education teachers, working with special education teachers, agreed that "collaboration and support of individual efforts" was important to team success.

This was not to say that the teachers didn't demonstrate negative traits from time to time. Each teacher had moments when they were "uptight" or nervous during a discussion. Well into their first year together, after school one day, Margret and Katerina got "a little snippy" with each other. After discussing tasks needed to help implement a field trip, Katerina, in a teasing way, said that Margret was "being a bit bossy," and Margret, teasing back as she was leaving the room, claimed that Katerina was being "loud enough for the whole school to hear." Their tone was mostly playful. Almost without exception, the teachers, by virtue of the positive traits above, "got along famously."

2.2 In conjunction with their personality traits, the teachers quickly established and developed complementary roles from the outset that helped them to sustain their long-term collaboration.

The teachers appeared to establish roles that were either in common or that complemented one another, thereby providing what they termed, "a balance of roles," which afforded their collaboration an impetus to develop and be sustained. The balance

of roles that was needed at the outset began with Heather's role as an "Envisioner" and "Empowerer." Heather was the one who envisioned a different way of working together. She was motivated in part by her first-year difficulties at PCS to think of and write down a joint plan. Heather was also the one who outlined and wrote down joint ideas for each school year and each successive bloc. Just as important, Heather empowered Margret and Katerina to have authentic input into her vision. Empowering her new co-teachers helped set a "tone" for becoming "a team" and "team players," including the "we" perspective that peppered their discussions. In order to empower successfully, Heather listened intently to Margret's and Katerina's ideas, often paraphrasing, affirming, or complimenting an idea. Even though she was the Teacher Leader, she allowed and encouraged their input to modify her plans—very open to their suggestions. She was interested in better ideas and it didn't matter to her whose idea was eventually brought to fruition.

Just as important as having a vision and empowering one's co-workers, Margret's and Katerina's initial response to Heather was pivotal. In the beginning they brought the enthusiasm and intensity of being first-year teachers—first year at PCS for both of them, and also first year for Katerina as an inductee to the profession. Margret in particular, by virtue of her experience, brought in many fresh ideas, like how to restructure the learning centers. They each listened intently to Heather's vision, immediately trusting and supporting it. Together, the three of them, by acting and responding with complementary, balanced roles, provided the spark and the on-going enthusiasm to launch their collaborative endeavor.

Growing and sustaining their collaboration required additional roles and responses. Heather retained her roles as Envisioner and Empower, yet these roles were gradually subsumed in part by Margret and, to a lesser extent, by Katerina. Heather took on the role of chief "Improviser," leading their improvisational presentation, "Big Group." She also, by virtue of her experience and propensity to come up with ideas, was uncanny in her ability to add to or modify the ideas that Margret and Katerina proposed. Heather was also the main "Governor," the person who, by listening closely, helped on occasion to "reel in wild ideas" or gently guide them (often by improvising) to a more likely and productive fruition—a fruition that was also more consistent within the framework of their curriculum.

Margret was the major "Idea Producer" and "Fitter." She consistently thought of a stream of ideas aimed at making all the pieces of the curriculum "fit together." Each teacher strove to integrate the curriculum—that was the mandate of ITI—yet Margret's desire "to have everything fit" was pronounced. Margret, perhaps more so than Heather, was also the "Resource Lady." Margret had a children's book for most every conceivable topic, and other resources like the fossils that they used in conjunction with a field trip and dinosaur theme. Heather's books were more of the reference type.

One of Katerina's roles was that of the "Techno Lady," completely taking over anything to do with the teachers' computer. She set up and maintained their classroom website. She composed, edited, and printed almost all of their joint work, like parent letters, as well as individual items for Heather and Margret. Especially in the beginning, Katerina was an adept "Observer-Mimic," often looking over to Heather's adjacent class

area to pick up and implement ideas for her lessons and her instruction. In this role, particularly the first year, Katerina was essentially a mentee, learning a great deal from Heather's, and to a lesser extent, Margret's mentorship. Thus, through these many roles, the teachers created ways to complement each other and balance the needs of their demanding environment.

2.3 The teachers' strong beliefs in developing a high quality curriculum helped to motivate and guide their practice of teacher collaboration.

The teachers and others perceived how strongly they believed in providing an excellent K-1 program for their students. Such strong belief stemmed in part from their mutual commitment to delivering a high quality curriculum, one that was of a higher quality than that which an individual teacher could do, because "three heads are better than one." Such belief was more than an intellectual exercise. These teachers believed strongly in each other in an emotional, bonded sort of way. They considered themselves as being like family members, or sisters. Such belief also had a moral dimension. The teachers grew to believe that their collaboration was the right way for them to work together as professionals. Heather talked about her desire to experience a "marriage" of their profession, one that was not present during her first year at PCS.

2.4 The teachers agreed and were consistently aware that their mutual goal was to create and deliver a curriculum of as high a quality as they could.

The teachers agreed on a mutual goal of quality curriculum right at the outset. This agreement was an implied one at first, then became explicit over time as they talked about the goal of their collaboration, some of which we discussed as a group in the course

of my inquiry. This is an important finding because research has demonstrated that a lack of agreement about a group's goal usually translates into failure for the group (Kraus, 1980; Smith & Scott, 1990).

2.5 The teachers created an unequal, yet dynamically balanced and satisfactory (to the teachers) exercise of power in their joint decision-making related to curriculum and instruction.

Throughout data generation I looked for difficulties in exercising power among the teachers, yet found little evidence. The teachers appeared to share power, though not equally. This was probably due in part to unequal status. Katerina was a young first-year teacher from Germany, and whereas Heather and Margret might not think or talk about her status or power amongst the three of them as being anything less than equal, Katerina clearly exercised less power than Heather or Margret (especially the first year). During the second year Katerina said she felt like less of a mentee and more of an equal, though she would regularly defer to Heather and Margret's ideas. The second year she also contributed more in the way of ideas, though she was still ignored to a greater extent in their discussions than either Heather or Margret. However, this is one point where this hypothesis becomes quite tentative. Perhaps, for example, Katerina created more of her power from her role as the "Techie," with almost sole domain over the computer and its functions, including sole control of the class website. Heather and Margret didn't even know the user ID and password for accessing the website and had a variety of difficulties in using their joint computer.

Each of the teachers developed responsibilities and roles that helped to define the domains of power for their work together. If anything, power for making decisions about joint curriculum were in the hands of Heather and Margret. Heather, through generating their long-range plans (and writing them down), was the one who set the agenda for most of their discussions about joint curriculum. Margret, sometimes with a written agenda of her own yet more often in response to Heather's plan, was especially proficient at suggesting ideas and playing them out prior to any decisions or implementation.

The teachers didn't assign or acknowledge an unequal leadership status or exercise of leadership. They seemed to be quite proficient at alternating leadership roles, especially the second year. In a typical week, for instance, Margret would be in charge of organizing the field trip, Heather would assume responsibility for "Big Group" most days, and Katerina would compose the Friday parent letter, then they would rotate these responsibilities the next week. The way in which such joint responsibilities transpired wasn't always so equal for a given week, being lighter or heavier some weeks, but such leading, organizing, and composing worked out in an equal way over the course of each bloc, and the teachers were satisfied with such sharing of power.

2.6 Their collaborative practices were enacted and sustained consistently by "making things lighter," or laughing, teasing, and telling stories.

Everyday the teachers laughed, and most days they teased each other, calling each other descriptive names, like "Goldie" for Katerina's propensity to want to organize things. Such teasing was not mean-spirited or sarcastic, but rather enacted in a light-hearted way way. It was more in a vein of celebrating the other person, and the teachers

thought it was done in an even-handed, balanced way amongst the three of them. They also laughed, each in their own way. Heather seemed to laugh the most, often at herself and the circumstances that surrounded them. Sharing stories, mostly about students and parents, but also about other people and situations in their lives, was also a way of "making things lighter," or releasing their respective senses of humor.

2.7 Their collaboration was characterized by frequent communications and creating "space" for each other.

Each day the teachers balanced their face-to-face time with "space." At several junctures during the day, primarily during their joint planning period and after school, they discussed a task at hand—an upcoming field trip, parent conference, or parent letter, a science project, access to a book, and so forth—or they teased each other and traded stories during these periods or during recess, lunch, and in passing. Some of their discussions at these times were intense, requiring great focus, insight, and energy. They felt they could "handle" such a routine because of the "space" afforded them. Such space meant primarily the opportunity to return to their individual classes and teach the way they wanted to, as well as the opportunity to have a separate personal and family life, largely unimpeded by the other two teachers.

2.8 In terms of time, their collaboration was mostly task-oriented as opposed to relationship-oriented (in a five-to-one ratio).

The teachers spent 83% (108 minutes/day or 9 hrs/wk), on average, of their actual teacher collaboration time in a task orientation. The other 17% (22 minutes/day or 1.84 hrs/wk), on average, was spent in relationship-oriented activities ("familial collegiality").

2.9 Their collaboration benefited from having different levels of intensity each day.

Heather described the benefit of having different levels of collaboration best: “It refreshes you and also helps you do your own thing, and you don't feel overwhelmed by their presence like: ‘go away!’”

2.10 A greatly valued attitude and practice in their collaboration included the way each teacher looked out for the needs of the other teacher.

“Looking out for each other,” which included “looking to help,” was an attitude and practice that each teacher brought to the collaboration. It quickly became a practice from the first day as the teachers shepherded the three classes from place to place, keeping each others kids in line and behaving appropriately. Such practice became more commonplace as the teachers began to read and sense each others needs better, like Margret’s sense at times that Heather needed “space.”

2.11 The teachers were able to generate better ideas through a process of “hashing it out,” which included a modified “reach-test” way of arriving at an idea through the following seven steps (though at times they omitted one or another of these steps): (1) setting the stage, (2) topic initiation, (3) proposing an idea, (4) brainstorming/improvising, (5) clarification, (6) extension, and (7) affirmation/decision.

Here, I am making an assumption of “better” ideas. I don’t have evidence that their ideas were in fact better, though such a presumptive judgment was based on our combined experience (the teachers and mine) of over fifty years of observing and dialoging about curricular ideas with teachers in conjunction with our professional duties.

More important, in an effort to situate this finding I went back to the literature and reviewed findings by Scheidel and Crowell (1964) that closely resembled mine. One difference with this study is that the Scheidel-Crowell study didn't include "setting the stage." While this step wouldn't strictly be a part of developing an idea, I found that it created a context and/or segue point that benefited the ensuing idea discussion. In other words, during "setting the stage" the teachers relaxed and maintained their bond through teasing or sharing a story, sometimes related, sometimes not related to the ensuing idea discussion. Whether it was related or not didn't seem to matter much. Relaxing and bonding appeared to re-establish a closeness and a feeling that "we're in the trenches together," which in turn laid the foundation for making the ensuing discussion more productive or effective, and probably less tense.

Next, I found that one person (usually Margret in this case) would initiate a topic, typically through a suggestion in the form of a question, usually without proposing an idea (a step omitted in the Scheidel/Crowell model). Having a teacher initiate both a topic and an idea about that topic may have been too much power exercised at one time by one person, and hence was not consistent with their practice of sharing power or empowering each other. Finally, in accord with my findings, I would replace the modification step in the Scheidel-Crowell model with the "brainstorming and improvisation" process in which the teachers engaged. These two processes, more involved and complex than merely idea modification, tended to generate several ideas and modifications in a mostly non-judgmental, freeing, or non-blocking kind of manner, and thus appeared to be crucial in developing better ideas for delivering their curriculum. The greatest similarity with the

Scheidel/Crowell model was the circularity, or spiral progression of discussion, and hence a reason for the apparent inefficiency of the teachers' discussions. Wilson (1996) cautions, however, that such idea development is "normal" and "seems to perform an important function" (p.181).

2.12 The teachers worked together in both typical and exceptional ways in order to adapt to daily exigencies.

While I could say in a broad sense that the teachers worked together in typical ways, it would be more accurate to say that the data reflect a variety of ways in which the teachers did the same task. Such variety meant that they did a task differently in a number of ways, and not just an occasional, different way. For example, a task as relatively simple as doing a joint parent letter (compared to the more complex tasks of bloc planning or science projects), transpired in several different ways. For instance, one week a teacher would poll the other two teachers for items to include in the letter, sometimes more than once, and then another week a teacher wouldn't poll at all. Or in another instance, they cancelled a Thursday field trip based on a rainy day forecast, so they pushed the completion of the parent letter from Friday to Wednesday, and shifted to jointly composing the letter on the computer. Katerina did the keyboarding and Heather helped with composition even though it wasn't their turn to do so. A reasonable explanation for such variability in task completion is that the teachers were adapting to daily exigencies that altered the way they delivered their curriculum.

Addressing Both Research Questions

3.1 The large, open design of the classroom was instrumental in affording an opportunity for the teachers to found and practice their collaboration.

The K-1 classroom was the only room of its kind at PCS, and the administration gave the teachers a relatively large degree of freedom as to how to found and conduct their collaborative practice. The teachers felt that the classroom design was essential to their collaboration, offering enough space in which to separate three classes and have common areas for both their learning centers and the "Big Group" seating area.

3.2 Their teacher collaboration required little or no formal knowledge, training, or experience about how to facilitate its founding or practice.

Heather had the most experience in team teaching, Margret had some experience working collaboratively with her previous grade level teams and her private preschool friends, and Katerina had a brief experience in her teacher education. Hence, the teachers had little knowledge or training in how to collaborate, especially not in a long-term collaborative endeavor. Heather's experience was perhaps most germane. She had been in the setting for year, she was familiar with the PCS environment, and she knew some of what one *shouldn't* do to collaborate in this classroom. This finding contradicts the Malone, Gallagher and Long (2001) study, to wit: "It is essential that teachers . . . working in a team setting have the knowledge of team dynamics and the processes involved in effective team functioning" (p. 589), and that teachers should therefore be afforded opportunities for such training.

3.3 Their teacher collaboration did not require that all the teachers be immediately familiar or comfortable with the setting (the school curriculum, the multi-age or multi-class setting).

Margret and Katerina came in to the setting with little formal knowledge or training in collaboration. Katerina had virtually no experience with PCS's curriculum, though Margret had extensive training in a literacy curriculum that was similar to PCS's. Both had never been in a multi-age or multi-class setting.

3.4 An implicit, informal context, rather than formal school measures, was in place to help found and support the practice of this teacher collaboration.

The school's history and current administration provided an implicit context in which the K-1 teachers felt free to pursue how they wanted to conduct their classroom. The teachers knew that they had more freedom in the way they delivered curriculum and instruction at PCS than the other public schools they had experienced, yet PCS had no formal representation or system in place to foster such freedom. This finding closely mirrors the informal school climate that Hargreaves (1994) describes, and contradicts a study (Malone, Gallagher & Long, 2001) that found organization of team activities, like ground rules for meetings, to be a critical component of teacher collaboration.

Interpreting the school as an implicit environment for freedom of action, while somewhat speculative, makes sense in the light of PCS's history and how the administration acted. For example, the teachers perceived Anita Drucker, the PCS Business Administrator, as a PCS founder and a "doer." On several occasions the teachers had seen Anita take action quickly and decisively, especially those that

concerned the facility or teaching materials. The teachers knew the history of PCS's founding and had an appreciation for the freedom in which a charter school was able to conduct itself. Relative to their teaching experiences in other contexts, they also explained that they felt relatively free at PCS to pursue teaching in ways that reflected their values and preference for conducting business in informal ways. For instance, together they pursued a school-wide "Trash-Free Tuesday," a lunch where everything was designed to be recyclable and environmentally friendly. They also initiated and implemented a classroom project, planting a corner garden next to the rear parking lot—even before the administration was completely ready to do so.

Not everything was implicit for the teachers. More explicit was how PCS went about fostering certain notions of how to think and act. For example, in Principal Towson's words, PCS focused on having more collegial and "caring interactions." The teachers agreed that he, as well as the other administrators, modeled collegiality and caring during faculty meetings, classroom visits, and in daily conversations. The teachers said that they were well aware that they should exhibit collegiality and caring interactions. In addition, the teachers agreed that they felt that the school goal of "we're here to learn," and focusing on the children's learning, was paramount at PCS. The teachers also recognized that Principal Towson was a strong supporter of collegiality, emphasizing it in faculty meetings, through distributing an article whose main theme was collegiality, and through his annual meetings with them.

3.5 Their collaboration benefited from having an initial vision and written plans from one person.

Heather was instrumental in how the room and the teachers' relationships would work. She invested a great deal of time in "picturing" how the K-1 room would look, and part of her vision was to remain open to the ideas of Margret and Heather, taking steps in their initial discussions to make sure that they felt empowered in the operation of their new classroom. She continued to outline and write up annual and bloc plans for their pre-bloc planning meetings.

3.6 The teachers were able to found and practice their collaboration under considerable pressure from diverse sources.

These teachers, as with most teachers, were under structured time constraints as they practiced their collaboration. They had to learn and implement a complex curriculum "on the run." In a real sense, they were working together and teaching in a "fish bowl." Their classroom was next to the front entrance, had numerous large windows on three sides and three glass door entrances. It was easy to look in and see what the teachers were up to at any given moment. And, like most teachers, they knew they had to meet or exceed the expectations of parents and administrators. Administrators, during class time or planning time, brought in large and small groups of parents or educators to witness and hear about the progress of the teachers in this classroom.

3.7 Neither the founding nor the practice of teacher collaboration required additional or systematic support from the school or administration.

This finding addresses a concern of administrators and policymakers that teacher collaboration would require additional time and resources to support adequately. Hargreaves (1994) calls for a systematic, concerted effort from administrators to provide

"authentic" support for teacher collaboration. While I pursued data that would show this teacher collaboration to require additional or special treatment and support from PCS and the administration, I found very little evidence. Instead I found that, if anything, these teachers and their classroom required the same or less support from the administration than any of the other teachers or classrooms.

Summary of Findings

My findings about teacher collaboration can be grouped in chiefly two ways, namely via: (A) how it was characterized (roughly in the order of occurrence), and (B) the context in which it functioned. Having read the findings in detail above, my hope is that reading through the summary list below will afford the reader a more accessible way to digest and consider the main findings of this study.

(A) This teacher collaboration was characterized by:

- An overt willingness on the part of each teacher to work together in a shared classroom;
- Teachers who initially had little familiarity with each other, the setting, or their teaching task;
- Having an initial plan or vision upon which to found and practice teacher collaboration;
- Teachers who had many "personality" traits in common;
- Teachers who quickly developed complementary roles;
- Teachers who shared key values in common;
- Teachers who consistently agreed upon their joint goals;

- Exercising power in ways that were mutually satisfactory;
- Each teacher's ability to "make things lighter" (through stories, teasing, laughter);
- Talking often with each other;
- Creating "space" for each other;
- Different levels of intensity;
- A "reach-test" process for generating and planning ideas;
- Making exceptions to routine ways of doing things;
- A task to relationship orientation of five to one.

(B) The context in which this teacher collaboration functioned was one where:

- Classroom design afforded the freedom to work together in more than one way;
- Mostly implicit, rather than formal school measures, were in place to support it;
- Considerable pressure, in many forms, was an everyday part of their existence;
- Additional support from the administration was not needed.

Major Findings

Drawn from the findings above, the major findings of this study may be summarized as follows:

1. This teacher collaboration was characterized by an unequal, yet balanced and satisfactory (to the teachers) exercise of power in their decision-making related to their collaborative endeavors.
2. The teachers created and employed a foundation of "familial collegiality" to support their generation and planning of ideas in relation to their curriculum and instruction.

3. The teachers established and developed complementary roles from the outset that helped them to sustain their collaboration.
4. As they discussed ideas, the teachers practiced a modified version of a "reach-test" cycle (suggestion of an idea, agreement to the idea, examples to clarify the idea, and affirmation of the idea).
5. The teachers apportioned their time between collaborative tasks and relational activities in a ratio of five-to-one.

Much in the same way that a plant is supported and nourished by its roots, the conclusions that follow are designed to emerge from the findings above.

Conclusions

Discontent breeds innovation. This dictum seems especially true for American education ever since it was "sputniked," or jolted out of complacency in 1957 by a communist satellite. Over the last half century, numerous experiments, innovations, and new directions in education have been initiated and filtered through much of the country. From Head Start to No Child Left Behind to local initiatives, every presidential administration and thousands of school districts across the country have tried their hand at educational innovation. This broad context of discontent and innovation is an important part of the sociocultural backdrop for the teachers' collaboration.

Charter schools in the United States are but one installment in a story of persistent educational innovation. The charter school movement reflects a discontent with traditional public school systems held by many parents, teachers, administrators, and policymakers. Such discontent became the breeding ground for promulgating a new

charter school in central Texas, the Pathways Community School (PCS). The founders of PCS wanted to build a school, or an "Educational Village," that was better than their surrounding choices for a traditional public school. Co-founder Anita Drucker led a parent-teacher-administrator crusade to charter and found a school community that made more sense to them than the approach that had frustrated them in the Hubble ISD.

Similarly, three teachers embarked on their journey of collaboration. Heather James and her two co-teachers, Margret Miller and Katerina Yost, combined to found and practice an innovative collaboration at PCS. In spite of her frustration and a difficult first year, Heather carefully planned and then opened up her vision of what working together might mean to Margret and Katerina. Margret and Katerina trusted, supported, and began to work together with Heather. In their sisterly way, this collaboration approached the kind of interdependence that Bakhtin (1981) espoused, one where the teachers were engaged in a mutual process of becoming through each other.

The teachers' physical proximity and frequent communications were the foundation and means, respectively, through which they initiated such interdependence. The teachers quickly saw that "three heads are better than one," and they committed to investing their considerable energy into tackling the immense and complex task of delivering as high a quality curriculum and instruction for forty-eight students in as "smooth" a way as they could. Their passionate engagement and steady commitment led them to found and practice a long-term collaboration.

In the description and findings thus far we've ascertained an idea of who these teachers were, their context, and their predominant roles and processes in relation to their

collaboration. With these in mind, my focus becomes one of situating this teacher collaboration in relation to theory. In order to accomplish this, I turn now to the key characterististics, roles, and patterns of the teachers' collaboration, comparing and contrasting them in relation to current thinking.

Revisiting Theory

Connecting back to theory helped me to situate and explicate more precisely what the teachers did to found and practice their collaboration. After reviewing dozens of theories and models of collaboration, including those from diverse fields such as business, communications, and nursing, and after reviewing my conclusions from the literature in chapter two, I chose to examine below, due to their closely commensurate findings, four theoretical viewpoints of teacher collaboration in terms of how they relate to my findings. My aim in doing so is to differentiate the collaboration in this study from those studied below, specifically Hargreaves (1994), DiPardo (1999), Erickson (1989), and John-Steiner (2000). Based on this analysis, I then propose how this study adds to the current literature on teacher collaboration.

Hargreaves: A "Moving Mosaic"

While Hargreaves (1994) argued for teacher collaboration on a school-wide scale, some of his findings appear to be relevant to three teachers working together in the same classroom. He described how the metaphor of a "moving mosaic" applied to postmodern collaborative relationships. Using this metaphor, Hargreaves emphasized that teacher collaboration was characterized by "warm human relationships of mutual respect and understanding and that these traits were "combined with the toleration and even

encouragement of debate, discussion and disagreement" (p. 239). While this was true with my three teachers, I would argue for a more elaborate connection than "combined." In this study the teachers were able to debate, discuss, and disagree *because* of their warmth, mutual respect, and understanding, and that such traits and discussions were made possible, in part, because they understood and could empathize with each other's context so well. Hargreaves also points to how such traits can create "flexibility," and "risk-taking," which in turn can "lead to positive results among the students" with certain "innovations." One such innovation in this study was the implementation of "Big Group," when the teachers would improvise a lesson about Lifeskills or other topics. Such improvisation was a good example of risk-taking that required flexibility of the teachers on a daily basis.

In a "moving mosaic," Hargreaves stressed that schools need to have an "orchestration of education vision" that takes place along a "continuum of teacher empowerment" (p. 249). While derived in relation to a school-wide context, this implication also applied to my three teachers. For example, based on Heather's initial vision for working together on a joint curriculum, Margret, and to a lesser extent, Katerina, contributed to and modified Heather's vision, in part, because they felt empowered by Heather's openness to their ideas. This process is what Hargreaves calls: "creating the vision together" (p. 250). However, my findings diverge from his study, in that the teachers did not demonstrate what he urges next, namely, an "equal voice in decision-making processes." Instead, my teachers exercised power in decision-making unequally, an issue that I revisit in my gestalt below.

DiPardo: A "Flowing Stream"

DiPardo (1999) used the metaphor of a flowing stream to capture the essence of teacher collaboration in her study. Following this metaphor, the "joint work" (Little, 1990) of teachers became "a continual process of transformation." In a similar way, the three teachers in this study were transforming their relationship to each other. Such transformation was exemplified in Katerina's shift from a mentee to more of a "mutual mentor" the second year. But unlike a gradual, continuous change, her transformation was partly a function of the change from one school year to the next. In other words, she perceived her first, inductee year, as one in which she was primarily a learner, when "there was this huge learning curve." The second year, she admitted, was still about learning, but to a much lesser degree. The second year she became a "mutual mentor," though still not as much of one as Heather and Margret. Teaching relationships may be unique in this way, possibly offering enough time and "space" for shifts in roles due to their extended periods of time away from each other, particularly in the summer. In any case, their collaboration in some instances was more like a frog periodically hopping on its way to becoming a princess, rather than a flowing stream.

Erickson: "Mutual Help"

While Erickson (1989) spoke primarily to the relations between teacher and researcher, his conclusions seemed to exemplify in some ways the relations among the three teachers in this study. For example, the teachers demonstrated that, like Erickson's participants, they could take a leap of faith with co-workers, especially so in the beginning of their collaboration, and then dialogue enough about substantive issues so

that they could see "one another as reasonable—as making sense" (Erickson, 1989, p. 439). More importantly, Erickson asserted that mutual help must be "genuine, not just action that looks like help" (p. 431). Being genuine in this case, or providing "heartfelt help" as Margret put it, was vital to their collaborative relations throughout my investigation. These teachers consistently showed that they cared for one another. The depth of their feelings for one another bordered on that of the fondness and even love that family members share with each other. In this sense, their mutual help and how they felt about one another often exceeded that of being genuine.

John-Steiner: "Creative Collaboration"

Lastly, I looked at the way in which John-Steiner's (2000) group, or "thought community," conceptualized collaborative patterns and viewed collaborative endeavors "as dynamic, changing processes." Their classification of collaboration was not hierarchical, but instead was conceived as "gradations" (p. 197), which seemed to be reflective of how the three teachers in this study created their collaboration.

John-Steiner's group theorized four broad patterns for collaborations: Distributed, Complementary, Family, and Integrative. After evaluating these four patterns, I concluded that this teacher collaboration cut across each of the patterns, but in different ways. Drawing from the distributed pattern, the teachers demonstrated throughout my inquiry that they could easily "exchange information and explore thoughts and opinions," and that they operated in "informal and voluntary" ways (John-Steiner, 2000, p. 198). However, this pattern characterizes casual, conversational settings like a conference or electronic discussion group. The three teachers had casual conversations, but involved,

energetic, focused, "hashing it out" discussions (sometimes prolonged over weeks in length) about substantive issues were more typical and meaningful to their collaboration.

The complementary pattern comes closer to how the teachers created their collaboration, characterized by a negotiation of goals and a common vision. While the teachers' goals were more implicit and not necessarily negotiated, they did agree upon a common vision based initially on Heather's thinking. The complementary pattern was also characterized by "a division of labor based on complementary expertise, disciplinary knowledge, roles, and temperament." Heather, Margret, and Katerina quickly figured out who had different skills and resources. Katerina was mostly happy to take over most anything having to do with their joint computer, and Heather and Margret were glad to have her do so, not having great interest or acumen in computer skills. Likewise, Margret and Katerina were content with Heather in her lead role as long-term planner and as occasional "Governor," pulling ideas toward greater practicality and more appropriate learning processes for their students. And both Heather and Katerina accepted Margret's initiative, listened intently to her many ideas, and appreciated access to her many books and resources. Regarding complementary disciplinary knowledge, Heather, through years of teaching experience and her training in PCS's curriculum, was able to act initially as a mentor with Katerina, and to lesser extent, with Margret. However, by their second year they had become less complementary in their knowledge of teaching and curriculum, and became instead more equal, or "mutual mentors" as they would put it. The teachers also complemented one another's temperament: Margret with high energy, Heather more "laid back," and Katerina somewhere in between the two. This may have been one of the

reasons why the teachers were able to "hash out" their ideas together with a degree of harmony.

In a complementary collaboration, the participants also create "mutual understanding" (John-Steiner, 2000, p. 198). The data from my inquiry support the notion that the teachers were learning to, as George Lakoff described his work with a colleague, "live in each other's minds" (in John-Steiner, 2000, p. 198). The teachers had developed a common language and sometimes used it simultaneously when, for example, on a field trip the first year Heather and Margret exclaimed at once, "noise pollution!" as they peered into their group of cacophonous children. Many times the teachers would finish each other's sentences, or wonder in awe during a discussion: "I was just thinking the same thing!" As in a complementary collaboration, the teachers were adding to each other's insights as they practiced their craft. What the complementary pattern does not include, is how the teacher's division of labor was also horizontal, where the same tasks were rotated amongst the three teachers, like taking the lead role in planning the weekly field trip or composing the parent letter.

A third pattern that John-Steiner identifies is that of family collaboration. Here we find that roles are "flexible or may change over time" (John-Steiner, 2000, p. 200). She defines this type of collaboration as "a dynamic integration of expertise," where participants "help each other to shift roles, including the move from novice to a more expert level" (John-Steiner, 2000, p. 201). The teachers demonstrated this most clearly with Katerina's shift from an inductee teacher, with little experience or knowledge of the PCS curriculum, to a role closer to that of a "mutual mentor." Over the course of this

inquiry, however, I observed how their roles shifted and then became somewhat static, as opposed to dynamic. Perhaps, however, their roles will continue to shift with the passage of time. In addition, while still within a complementary pattern, participants can stand-in for each other as in a family, tending to remain committed to each other beyond that of short-term relationships. Toward the end of data generation, I remember waiting for Heather to return from an errand so I could confirm a time for a joint interview, during which Katerina urged me a couple of times to go home and rest assured that the specific time for the interview was okay with Heather. Still concerned, I waited for about forty-five minutes but to no avail. The next day at the interview Katerina regaled us with yesterday's story and how silly it was of me to wait so long because Heather wasn't going to mind anyway. Heather agreed.

Managing conflict also enters into the family collaborative pattern. In congruence with John-Steiner, the teachers were "willing to confront their difference and, through negotiations, to modify the structure of their organization" (John-Steiner, 2000, p. 202). Their differences in how to consider their weekly parent letter was a critical incident that demonstrated the way the teachers dealt with conflict. In discussing the status of the parent letter with some passion, Katerina argued how she valued a paperless, accessible, online method of delivery, while Margret said she preferred it to be sent home as a more accessible, concrete way for parents to have a lasting record of their child's early education. After some back and forth discussion of the issue (Heather remained mostly neutral), they decided to employ their individual preferred method for their respective parents. In a similar manner to that of family collaboration, the teachers shared the vital

objectives of their profession, growing over time "to fashion a more egalitarian structure," developing "shared companionship and a sense of belonging" (John-Steiner, 2000, p. 201). I would stress how the teachers became *more* egalitarian. The data indicated shifts in power, and evidence that Heather, by virtue of her roles (in particular, that of "Governor"), longevity as a respected teacher, and her greater knowledge of PCS and its curriculum, while she had empowered Margret and Katerina, still retained a significant power differential with Katerina. For example, Heather could and did exercise a veto on occasion, or at least modified ideas with greater ease than Katerina. Heather and Margret, on the other hand, were much more egalitarian in how power was exercised. Thus, their shifting and balance of power was likely due to their relative teaching experience and the different power roles that they played.

The fourth and final pattern is an integrative collaboration, which typically requires a "prolonged period of committed activity" that thrives on "dialogue, risk taking, and a shared vision," and that shares a "common set of beliefs, or ideology" (John-Steiner, 2000, p. 203). She doesn't define "prolonged," but as of this writing the teachers have committed to a third year, and they've shared a vision of how to teach together from the outset, negotiating slight modifications of that vision over time. It's also true that they thrived on dialogue with one another, though they didn't do it as much later as in their hectic beginning. As far as risk-taking, the teachers attempted more initiatives together than they thought they would have as autonomous teachers. They didn't "thrive" on risk-taking, but they felt more emboldened to initiate a new program, like "Trash-Free Tuesday," because of their confidence in numbers and their ability to divide tasks into

more "do-able" portions. In relation to ideology, the teachers thought it was important to have similar philosophies about teaching, learning, and behavior management.

This teacher collaboration demonstrated facets from each of John-Steiner's collaborative patterns. While this was true, I would argue that the teachers in this study exhibited and thought of their collaboration in a way that seems closer to that of John-Steiner's family pattern. While the teachers were integrative in important ways, I placed them in a family pattern for two reasons. First, they expressed, for the most part, a "fluidity of roles." Increasingly, over time, each teacher was able to stand-in for the other teacher, either in the sense of sharing a like mind about their vision and joint conduct of the classroom, or in the sense of speaking confidently for another teacher's way of doing business. They had some established roles, yet these were weakening and being subsumed by each teacher over time. Second, and equally important, the teachers perceived themselves as "family," or as "sisters." They cared a great deal about one another and expressed a love for each other in a platonic or spiritual sense. They looked almost constantly to help one another. Each teacher took great pains to follow through on a task knowing that a co-teacher was depending on her, not wanting to disappoint her co-teachers. Heather talked about how (and Margret and Katerina added similar stories), if she hadn't finished the Friday parent letter the night before, she would get up at 4:30 or 5:00 in the morning to do so.

Thus far in their collaboration the teachers have exercised a hierarchical power relationship in their joint decision-making. Such a structure for power, unlike John-Steiner and others who postulate or intimate an equal exercise of power, was one of the

cornerstones of the teachers' collaboration. The teachers in this study were not equal in their exercise of power due to several possibilities. Differences in their length of time as teachers and as residents at PCS, and perhaps more importantly, differences in their roles, precluded an egalitarian basis for their collaboration. As for the resulting inequality, these teachers had no complaints (as much as I tried to unearth them). They all expressed satisfaction with how power was exercised in the course of delivering their joint curriculum, taking great pride in the quality of their relationships, as well as the resulting quality of their K-1 program.

While the teachers fit closely into John-Steiner's family pattern, their collaboration also transcended this pattern—and any of the four patterns—in an important way. These teachers operated in a context that was unique in many ways from those studied by John-Steiner and her associates. Instead, we see three teachers striving to deliver a complex curriculum and an appropriate learning environment for forty-eight young children, as we've seen, in a "fishbowl." After committing to teach in this context, which included a commitment to work together, these teachers knew they would be under a daunting time pressure to "pull it all off." They characterized their response to such a context as one of "survival." After Heather's experience of a difficult first-year at the new campus, these three teachers managed to create their collaboration in this unique and challenging context.

Challenges to Teacher Collaboration

While the teachers founded and practiced their collaboration in harmonious ways, they nevertheless faced several challenges. One challenge for the teachers was to deal

with their notion that they needed to be congruent in all things related to the conduct of their classroom. The teachers, as exemplified by Margret, felt compelled at first to do a great deal of co-teaching and to agree about how virtually everything should be accomplished in the classroom. However, they soon found such congruence to be burdensome and gradually diverged in several ways. For example, they quickly reduced their daily co-teaching to one mid-day "Big Group," and instead increased the amount of time they spent with their individual classes. They adapted the way in which they delivered the weekly parent letter, allowing for different ways to accomplish the same ends. Because they were flexible in their ability to discuss and make adjustments agreeably, the teachers could let go of their initial need to be so congruent in their conduct of the classroom, thereby reducing their collaborative time and commitments.

In a related vein, perhaps a more serious challenge to the teachers was simply to get along with each other on a long-term basis. All close relationships are subject to difficulties in maintaining harmony or equilibrium, and these teachers were no different. They had occasions where their opinions conflicted, but these seemed to be few in number or intensity. Heather and Margret remembered how they got into a disagreement on the phone over a field trip idea, but they soon resolved it in-person the next day, and figured out that it was a misunderstanding created by a lack of physical cues during their phone communication. They then vowed to avoid phone communications whenever possible, and to rely instead on face-to-face discussions. Hence, the teachers were able to negotiate their way through the few conflicts they had, often resolving issues with win-win solutions as in the case of the weekly parent letter.

What I propose next, in the form of a gestalt, is a way of situating and explicating their collaboration in relation to how the teachers balanced their mostly family collaborative pattern. Such a gestalt, to which I now turn, requires an interpretation not divorced from data, which instead emerges from my description, specific findings, and comparisons to relevant theoretical frameworks.

Gestalt: Ideas from a Balanced "Family"

Throughout my inquiry I kept asking myself and others, in much the same way as Peshkin (1988) did in his study of a Christian school: What's the unifying theme, or gestalt for this teacher collaboration? To answer this as the data took shape from week to week, I devised, like Peshkin, numerous gestalts as I traveled back and forth between the field and my office, recursively sifting through the growing data, searching and re-searching for a gestalt that provided an increasingly meaningful way to interpret what the teachers were doing and thinking. Toward the end of this process I settled upon the idea that what the teacher's had created was a balanced "family" of sorts. It is the origin of such balance that I consider first, followed by how the teachers balanced job pressures, power, their interrelationships as they worked together to create a balanced family, and lastly, a metaphor for their collaboration.

Creating their balanced family had an origin, or an impetus; a motivation that drove the teachers to be successful. Such an origin is one with which most teachers become intimately familiar: that of performing for stakeholders, including parents, administrators, policymakers (who take form in their state mandated tests), and even the children the teacher is teaching. In addition, the teacher is her own critic, wishing to do

her job well as a matter of pride and self-respect. As they reflected on this state of affairs, Heather, Margret, and Katerina talked with me regarding how they thought daily about how to please their stakeholders, or "how to look good as a teacher in their eyes." The origin for creating their collaboration came from Heather's recollection about how, from the first day of working together, they wanted "to make everything go smoothly." This is, in a sense, a code language that teachers use when they think about how they want things to appear to their stakeholders. Making everything go smoothly became a mantra for these teachers. Each teacher committed to their collaboration as one way to meet the objective of having things go smoothly in their classroom.

Because time was short for the teachers in terms of preparing for the start of their first school year together, they figured that the best way to "pull off" the parent/child orientation night and first week of school smoothly was to "put their heads and hands together." At first it was "survival." They worked under pressure at a furious pace their first three days, designing and setting up their seven learning centers, as well as deciding a myriad of other details, mostly those involving lesson plans and procedures. At the end of their first week of working together, they talked about how they had "survived," and that it was time to "balance things out a little."

Balancing the Pressure to Perform

So how did the teachers respond to the pressures of their setting? First, the teachers went about creating a largely informal climate for working together. Creating informality was a way of balancing out the formal ways in which they taught their respective classes and related to parents and administrators. Heather set the tone for

working informally, chiefly through her "laid-back" personality, including the frequency and ease with which she laughed. Margret and Katerina responded in kind to Heathers lead. Each teacher became good at "making things lighter," not only laughing often, but teasing each other, and telling stories—lots of stories, from the funny or weird things their students did, to daily news events or stories from their past. PCS was also a school that matched such informality, where administrators and teachers were sometimes formal and acted in a professional manner, yet more often conversed in a casual and friendly fashion.

The teachers also fashioned other ways to balance the pressure of performing in a "fish bowl." In such a pressure-packed environment, the teachers excelled at helping one another. Mutual support was evident throughout data generation, each teacher consistently "looking to help" the others, being mindful of their needs, conscientiously following through on tasks, empathizing with each other emotionally as well as professionally, learning to "read" and give "space" to one another, and being flexible via their willingness to accept different ideas and incorporate different ways to accomplish tasks. These teachers demonstrated daily how they cared for one another. Such caring and support helped them to cope and make the pressures of their job and environment much more livable on a moment-to-moment basis.

Balancing Power

These teachers hardly did anything of a confrontational manner. They valued harmony over exercises to determine whose idea was better. Compared to other studies, these teachers were a paradox. They balanced power, in large measure, by letting go of it.

Heather emphasized empowerment from the beginning. Margret knew that one of her challenges in her portion of their collaboration was to learn when to let go of one of her ideas. Overall, they each emphasized that better ideas were paramount in their practice, not whose idea it was. They generated and planned, or "hashed out" ideas, with little concern for who originated it. "These teachers check their egos at the door," said an administrator.

They also balanced power through maintaining and accepting autonomy. An individual teacher could still exercise power individually and make modifications of a joint task, like Margret and her delivery of the parent letter. They demonstrated flexibility, periodically accepting different ways that a teacher wanted to do something. They retained significant portions of their day to conduct teaching in their own unique way in their respective class areas.

The teachers also balanced power in their respective roles. Even though I've described their exercise of power as unequal, more importantly, the teachers thought that their joint power was distributed fairly. Katerina was somewhat pivotal in their unequal exercise of power. Having the least power in generating and planning ideas, she could have complained loudly. Instead she graciously accepted her status as an inductee and learner, appreciative of being among veteran teachers, and focused instead upon making the best of her status. Perhaps more important, the teachers were moving in a more egalitarian direction, shifting to roles that made the balance of power more equal, like in their example of moving toward "mutual mentoring" in their second year together. While power is always an issue in relationships, it was seldom *at* issue in their collaboration.

Balancing Their Interrelationships

This last type of balance is more suggestive of the data (as opposed to being strictly grounded in it). The origins of why their relationship worked, while difficult to warrant, may have played a vital role in their success as collaborators. From the beginning, the teachers and I struggled to identify, at least with any precision, what it was about *who* they were that made a difference in their ability to work together harmoniously. In brief, the teachers persuaded me (in conjunction with my observations) that such harmony had to do with their unique mix of three factors: their respective personalities, teaching philosophies, and values. The point to make here is not so much that they had specific "personalities" that made them more amenable or likely to achieve success at collaboration (though this may be true), but that they had an appropriate *mix* of different personalities and that they accepted each others personality with little reservation. Heather, more reserved and "laid-back," Margret, initiating discussions with her driving energy, and Katerina's steady focus on learning and developing her roles, all mixed together to generate, plan, and implement the ideas that became the joint part of their curriculum. As far as their teaching philosophies and values, these were quite similar, and the teachers thought it was important for them to be so. Thus, balancing a mix of personalities, along with similar teaching philosophies and values, appeared to contribute to their ability to work together in harmony.

Collaboration as an Ecosystem

About half way through data generation, Heather first mentioned the metaphor of an ecosystem toward the end of our first IQA (Interactive Qualitative Analysis) session. I

discounted it at the time, instead moving on to other ways of conceptualizing their collaboration. After further consideration of the data corpus and through the struggle to represent their collaboration in writing, I felt compelled to return to her suggestion. It made more sense than any other metaphor that I had considered in relation to the data.

Collaboration as an ecosystem made sense for several reasons. First, an ecosystem requires balance in order to survive and thrive. The high quality, harmonious nature of their long-term work together was compelling evidence that they had survived and were thriving together. Second, such balance was periodically in a dynamic process of modification. Like the subtle shifts that often occur in an ecosystem, the teachers were successfully shifting their roles and gradually adapting to changes in both specific and general circumstances. They were flexible in relation to each other and to their goal or task at hand, making exceptions to their routines and accepting each other as unique individuals and professionals. Third, they thought and acted as a cohesive community, functioning as a unit, for example, when they made joint requests of the administration in order to meet their mutual teaching needs.

Lastly, the teachers exemplified interdependence in their ecosystem. They undertook Bruffee's "necessary interdependence" (1993, p. 172), but with a twist. While their collaboration might have been necessary, it became without doubt a willing one—and more. These three teachers were interdependent on a level of sisterhood, conveying a sense of Bakhtin's "find myself in the other, finding the other in me" (in Wertsch, 1998, p. 116). As a result of such closeness, the teacher's demonstrated moments of almost perfect intersubjectivity (Newsom & Newson, 1975), speaking the same phrase

simultaneously, finishing each others sentence, writing the same graph question independently, and sensing many of the needs and moods of fellow co-teachers. A final example of their interdependence was how they were learning their profession from each other, an example of John-Steiner's (2000) Vygotskian derivative, "mutual appropriation." They were becoming better at delivering curriculum on almost a daily basis because "three heads are better than one." In sum, Heather, Margret, and Katerina acted in concert as enthusiastic, flexible, mindful caretakers of their collaborative ecosystem, which included each other and the joint curriculum they worked on together.

Taking into consideration the collaboration literature across contexts, including an in depth review of teacher collaboration, and after critically situating this study in relation to theory above, I want readers to see how my examination of this teacher collaboration may contribute to a unique understanding of this phenomenon.

Adding to the Literature

Notwithstanding how the context of this teacher collaboration was unique among other studies of the same phenomenon, this study adds to the literature in five important ways. First, a daily, involved teacher collaboration among three general education teachers can be successful beyond the short-term. These teachers didn't hesitate to sign contracts for a second and third year of teaching and working together in the same classroom. As far as teacher collaborations in such terms, I found no other studies that matched or even came close to this teacher collaboration. Of the other non-teacher collaboration literature I reviewed, only John-Steiner's (2000) study was comparable in terms of the daily, intensely involved, longevity of this collaboration. Conversely to this

study, some studies have found that intensity in terms of time and energy is more characteristic of short-term, rather than long-term collaborations (DiPardo, 1999; Erickson, 1989; Malone, Gallagher & Long, 2001).

Second, by showing how general education teachers were successful in exercising unequal decision-making power in a collaborative endeavor, this study conveys a divergent picture of successful power relations from those teacher collaboration studies that have depicted power as equal (DiPardo, 1999; Feiman-Nemser & Floden, 1986; Kagan, 1991). Instead, we saw three teachers who were satisfied with how their respective power was exercised *unequally*. For example, Katerina, as a pivotal part of why their collaboration worked so well, saw the wisdom of learning from Heather and Margret, especially in the beginning, and even though her power did not equal that of her two co-teachers their second year, Katerina was satisfied with an increase in her power to impact their decision-making process.

Third, this teacher collaboration revealed, on the one hand, a unique mix of collaborative roles, and on the other hand, how such roles contributed through their complementarity to a successful collaboration in ways, as we've already seen, that differed from comparable studies like that of John-Steiner (2000). For example, Heather's empowerment role, especially in the beginning, diverged from that of the assertive leader, and Margret's and Katerina's follower roles in the beginning helped to make their early, rapid progress a reality.

Fourth, as depicted in Figure 2, the relationship or linkage of their "familial collegiality" with the tasks involved in orchestrating and implementing the goal of their

collaboration, better curriculum and instruction, is unique in the teacher collaboration literature (though paralleling in some ways that of John-Steiner's (2000) non-teacher collaborations).

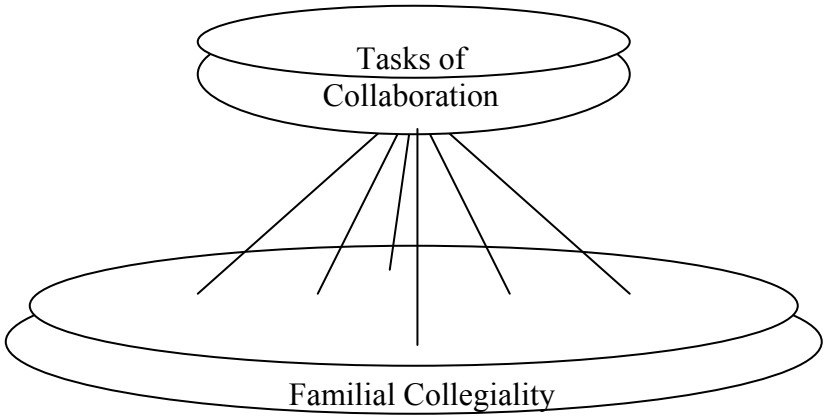

Figure 2. The interdependence of "Tasks of Collaboration" and "Familial Collegiality"

This linkage in Figure 2 reflects how teacher-collaborators, intending to or working to generate and plan exceptional ideas, must create and sustain a foundation of familial collegiality to, in turn, effectively balance the output and quality of their curriculum and instruction. The "legs," or lines that rest on the foundation of familial collegiality and connect to the generation and planning of ideas, represent the collaborative roles, teacher qualities, and so forth, that arise from familial collegiality and merge to effectively balance the tasks involved in orchestrating and implementing better curriculum and instruction. It may be that such a linkage is maintained and actively supported in an interdependent, symbiotic way.

Lastly, my contribution of how the teachers spent their time in their collaboration was unique. I thought it important to grasp the enormity of their challenge in terms of time, as well as to describe more precisely how teacher-collaborators ended up

apportioning their time among tasks and supportive relational activities, in this case, in a five to one ratio, respectively. Perhaps, like Wolcott's (1973) oft-cited tabulation of a principal's time, my consideration of the teacher's time in collaboration will survive more intact than the other contributions from this study.

Implications for Practice

Given that this collaboration was regarded as successful by the participants (the teachers, administration, and me), and the uneven history of collaborative teaching in this country, the findings from this study may have implications for other schools, teachers, and policymakers who contemplate the form and function of collaborative endeavors.

First, on the broadest level, if schools and architects are in the design stage of a classroom meant for multiple classes, they should consider obtaining authentic input from teachers. Appropriate design and input are probable first steps in laying the foundation for teacher collaboration. An open design affords many ways to configure the classroom, and teacher input helps to facilitate their sense of ownership of a classroom.

Second, at the school level, it may not be necessary for administrators to provide additional time and resources in support of teacher collaboration—with the proviso and exception that it seems essential to provide enough joint planning time for teacher-collaborators, some of which should be structured into their daily schedule. Similarly, it may be important that the school not have an oppositional role, instead striving to be neutral, or better, to offer some time type of collegial climate that would tend to support teacher collaboration.

Third, at the level of the teachers, when considering the challenges of collaborative work, teachers should make a strong and consistent commitment to working together. It seems likely that such commitment would afford a fruitful beginning to joint work. Collaborating teachers should anticipate that they will need to invest an exceptional amount of time and energy in the beginning, and seek to help and understand fellow collaborators and the given challenges they decide to work on together. Also, the most important characteristics from which collaborating teachers seem likely to benefit and be judged upon include: being flexible, having a team attitude (that "we're all in the trenches together"), an ability to support and care for others, and a diminutive ego.

Limitations

The chief limitation in this study was related to participant access. As with most teachers, these three had little time to devote to activities that they perceived as not directly related to teaching. Their intentions were always good and they followed through on my requests of them, though not necessarily as a priority. Hence, the rate of turnover, particularly in regard to member-checking transcripts, took longer than I anticipated. In addition, often was the occasion when I would be talking with one of the teachers, or as a group, only to be interrupted by incoming children, parents, other teachers, and administrators. Thus, I didn't have as much interaction with the teachers as I had envisioned in my original research design. Other than this limitation, I followed closely the epistemology, methods, and procedures of naturalistic inquiry (Erlandson, et al., 1993).

Directions for Future Research

The findings of this inquiry point in several directions. First my research points to a somewhat unique form of teacher collaboration: three general education teachers creating and enacting a joint curriculum in an open classroom. Further research into such settings aimed at particular patterns would provide a more in-depth view of how teachers found and practice collaboration.

Second, my research, along with others, indicated that there may be a preference among teachers for a familial type of collegiality. One direction for researchers would be to further delineate this and other forms of collegiality. Hence, subsequent research could be aimed at identifying and defining more precisely what it means to teachers to think and act in collegial ways.

Third, because the three teachers had fashioned a slightly different way to "reach-test" and generate their ideas, future research could investigate whether teachers conduct discussions and produce ideas in similar, different, or perhaps more effective ways.

Fourth, research comparing the dynamics of two versus three teachers working together might tell us more about the advantages and disadvantages of partnerships in teaching versus small groups working together. Three teachers, instead of two, might provide a better balance of personalities and roles in order to work long-term together.

Lastly, future teacher collaboration research could help to further define the relationships between the teachers' collegiality (relationship-orientation), how teachers generate ideas and accomplish tasks (task-orientation), and the way they apportion and focus their time.

Final Summary

In this report I have attempted to portray through rich and "thick" description the founding and practice of this teacher collaboration, including who these teachers were in relation to their collaboration. Theirs was a journey that required exceptional investments of time and energy, although this is no different from many teachers. Through their daily practice of collaboration, these teachers differed because they were able to attain a type of familial collegiality, an interdependent relationship as "sisters" that transported them beyond those collaborations or teams of a less caring, less passionate, or less involved nature.

Moreover, their knowledge of teaching and educational issues grew daily because they took advantage of being in close proximity. I heard many a discussion among them, from the federal NCLB Act to the latest curriculum ideas in science and social studies. Each day saw them generating and implementing new ideas for reaching and teaching their students. They knew from their experience that when it came to delivering a higher quality curriculum and supporting fellow teachers with greater collegiality and caring, "three heads are better than one."

The passion and commitment of these teachers was evident throughout their practice of collaboration. They knew each student better because each teacher had daily access to the informed input of their co-teachers, a unique opportunity of which they often took advantage. They strove to make appropriate daily adjustments based on the in-class data they collected and shared almost daily. They were truly excited about creating

an exceptional learning environment where students of all abilities could pursue their highest potential.

Lastly, these were teachers who created an innovative and adaptable vision, dynamically balanced their work together, and through great care, brought their vision steadfastly to fruition. It wasn't easy to found and practice this teacher collaboration, taking foresight, numerous collaborative qualities and abilities, and an unfailing desire on the teachers part to be interdependent and exchange mutual help on daily basis. Amidst a time-honored tradition of isolated teachers in the classroom, these three teachers show us that working together is not only possible, but perhaps more satisfying for all parties, whether students, parents, teachers, or administrators. On many levels, they make us believe that greater efforts at collaboration should be pursued in our schools.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: School, Teacher, and Research Timeline

In order to better see when events occurred in relationship to each other, below, in chronological order, are the timeframe for PCS, the teachers' entry into PCS, and the major portions of this study (in bold).

Date	PCS, Teacher Histories / **Research Timeline (in bold)**
August, 1998	PCS opens the original campus;
May, 2001	Heather is hired and begins training;
July, 2001	Heather starts teaching a K-2 class with three other teachers—15 students apiece—at the original campus;
August, 2001	PCS opens new campus (retaining original campus), and Heather's group of four teachers transfers into the subject classroom at this site;
May, 2002	All but Heather resign from teaching in the new K-2 classroom;
May, 2002	PCS reduces to three K-1 classes in the subject classroom;
June, 2002	Margret and Katerina are hired to teach at the new campus; I'm hired to be the Teacher Leader and teach a K-1 class at the original campus;
2002-2003	First year of teacher collaboration;
August, 2002	I resign my K-1 position at the original campus;
December, 2002	**IRB approval and start of fieldwork;**
January, 2003	**First round of individual interviews;**
March, 2003	**Second round of individual interviews;**
May, 2003	**Third round of individual interviews;**
July, 2003	Teachers begin start of second year together;
Aug-Sept, 2003	**Focus Group Interviews (including IQA: Interactive Qualitative Analysis);**
January, 2003	**Fieldwork ends;**
April, 2004	Teachers sign contracts for third year, 2004-2005.
April, 2004	**Written report finished;**

Appendix B:

Initial Examples, Non-Examples, and Levels of Teacher Collaboration

Examples and non-examples of practicing teacher collaboration further clarified my initial view of the phenomenon. I based these chiefly in accord with my research questions and the working definition above, which, in turn, were filtered through the lenses of experience and relevant literature. I arrange the following examples by how they demonstrate high, medium, or low levels of the *performance* of teacher collaboration in this setting:

> HIGH: An intensive level of collaboration starts when the teachers are intently engaged in face-to-face planning and negotiation of classroom duties and responsibilities, characterized by a high degree of give and take (talking/listening turn-taking), focused on the task at hand without interruptions, "sidebars," or stories. One teacher (a) suggests an idea for a lesson, (b) the other two react with agreement or alternate suggestions intermingled with (c) rationales for each suggestion, then they (d) decide or rally around one suggestion, (e) make compliments, (f) write down the idea, (g) identify what needs to be done to actualize the idea, (h) assign roles and responsibilities for accomplishing the idea, (i) make the idea happen, and finally (j) comeback together to evaluate the results. In addition, they see themselves as part of a larger entity whose success, both with their respective students and with the classroom as a whole, is dependent upon their success at collaborative endeavors.
>
> MEDIUM: At this level, around half of the steps may be missing, for example when there is a crisis or little time for a high level of collaboration. Interruptions, sidebars, and/or stories may also get in the way of collaborative efforts.
>
> LOW: Typically no immediate proximity. One teacher looks through a book that might be of use to the other two teachers (who are out of the room doing another task for the group). Other examples may include brief verbal exchanges that verify or clarify duties or responsibilities (some with close proximity), and eye contact, nods or hand signals that signify responsibility for group supervision during recess or on field trips.

Non-examples that indicate something other than collaborative practice may include when the teachers greet each other, work individually to develop lesson plans, or when in the process of teaching their respective classes.

The *sustaining* of teacher collaboration in this setting may be clarified by the following examples:

HIGH: In terms of a teacher's *identity*, each teacher is (a) very open to and often supportive of the new ideas and suggestions being generated by the other teachers, (b) marked by a lack of ego involvement in whose ideas are eventually promulgated, (c) able to be both a leader and a follower, (d) able to commit to working together with other people and follow through with assigned tasks, and (e) able to value and practice both humor and seriousness. In terms of their *knowledge*, each teacher arrives in the classroom with the basic, formal understandings of the curriculum and pedagogy to be implemented, and knows the basics of behavior management for their age group. Such basic knowledge is supplemented by in-depth knowledge of various facets of the curriculum, pedagogy, and/or behavior management. Practical teacher knowledge (Elbaz, 1983; Clandinin & Connelly, 1995) is also widely accessed and implemented in conjunction with formal knowledge. The *contexts* of classroom and school also operate to authentically support teacher collaboration. School philosophy and curriculum are explicit about collaborative types of relationships (cooperation, collegiality, etc.). School administrators actively voice and practice collaboration or support collaborative efforts on a consistent basis. The classroom and school schedules afford ample opportunities for teacher collaboration.

MEDIUM to LOW: Construction of teacher collaboration at these levels would be either weak in the areas of identity, knowledge, and context outlined above, or only strong in a portion of these key areas.

A non-example of constructing teacher collaboration may include when teachers commit only to individual teaching practices focused only upon their respective lessons and students, or when the key elements of identity, knowledge, and context are missing.

Appendix C: Questions for the Semi-Structured Interviews

1. If you don't mind, tell me a little about yourself.
2. Tell me about your teaching experience.
3. Tell me about your story of coming to teach at PCS.
4. Tell me about the collaborative experiences you've had as a teacher? What did you think about them (it)? Why?
5. How would you describe the collaboration that the three of you do in this classroom?
6. In relation to working with the other two teachers, describe to me how you work with them.
7. What type of person do you think functions well in a collaboration in this setting? Why?
8. What roles do you play in this collaboration? What roles do the other two play?
9. What do you enjoy the most about working together with _____ and _____?
10. What do you think has been essential in order for your collaboration to work? Why?
11. What are some of the challenges or difficulties that you've encountered in working together? Why?

Appendix D: Example of Transcript and Coding in Atlas-ti

Teacher Collaboration: Fieldnotes

1/6/03, Monday, 1:55 p.m.: staff working day

H. and M. (both unseeded patent cable side-by-side	H sharing: curr ideas
H.: "we need to ..." (science lesson plans)	H directive: curr ideas; H use of "we"
M.: "if I understood that correctly..."	M affirming/paraphrasing: curr ideas M clarifying: curr ideas
H. does most of the talking;	H suggesting, asking

O.C. M seems frequently to ask clarifying types of questions orparaphrase what she's been hearing.
Might this be part of the TC process?

2:09 p.m.	
"I thought we..."	M.: use of "we"
"We probably at some point want to..."	
"We talked about doing..."	
"So where are we?"	M asks clarifying question

O.C.: M. in particular, yet all three teachers use the term "we" frequently. Is the use of "we" an indication of attitude, approach, strategy, and/or group consciousness, and will the teachers identify with and/or implement "we" in other areas of teacher collaboration?

Friday, 1/10/13, 12:55 (M,H,K): lunch at Panda Express Group eating: bonding experience?	Bonding
M.: enthusiastic, excited about incorporating a math idea.	M.sharing: curriculum idea M. enthusiasm
H.: teasing (about M.'s frequent handwashing) and stories: teasing	H. sharing: jokes H. good-natured teasing K tells Canadian joke K. good-natured teasing
1:30 p.m. school staff meeting 1:35 p.m. Vice Principal: "For those of you who arrived on their own schedules..."	VP gentle, yet sarcastic

8-18-03, 4-5:15 pm, focus group interview: IQA (Interactive Qualitative Data Analysis)

Affinity Results

Teacher Collaboration

Question: "What has the experience of teacher collaboration been like for you?"

Ecosystem / Sustaining Culture (H)

I. Family (M) "Glue" (H) & M)

- Group Identity
  - Belonging to each other
  - We are not alone (M)
  - Commitment to each other (J)
  - Following through on tasks (J)
- Supportive (K & M)
  - Emotionally (M)
- Friendly (M)
- Accepting (J)
- Seedbed for Idea Production (J)
  - Sharing lots of ideas (K & H)
  - Listening to ideas (H)
  - Validating ideas (H)
  - Supporting the new ideas of others (H)
- Learning from each other (M)
- Having a release valve (J)
  - Getting your mind off things (K)
  - Venting (K) & Laughter (K)

II. Collegiality (J)

- Teamwork (K)
- 3 heads are better than one (M)
- On the same page (M)
- Mentoring (J)
  - Reciprocal (M)
  - Cyclical (M)
  - Parity (J)
- Mutual respect (J)
- Helpful (K & M)
- Making ideas better (M)
- Cooperate as a team/unit (H)
- Support System (J)
  - Aide to memory (K)
    - Daily reminder of things that need to be done (K), and that you might not do by yourself (K)

III. Mind Opening (K)

- Improvising (J)
  - "Yes, and … " (M)
  - Throw something out
  - Input ideas to try (H)
  - Coming from different angles / perspectives (M)
- Imagine possibilities played out (H)
- Create new possibilities (H)
- Make plans for future ideas (H)
- Review past ideas (H)
- Flexibility (M)
  - Hard when your ideas clash with others; (M)
  - Odd man out sometimes (M)

IV. Hashing It Out (H

- Like a puzzle (H)
  - Challenging (K)
- Problem-solving (H)
- Consider limits (H)
- Knowing the other (K)
  - Preferences
  - Positive experiences
  - Negative exper.
- Getting to know self(K)
  - Assigning tasks (J)

Other comments: great concept (K); a real (new) experience (K); it's working (K); teamwork: pride of "our program" (M); can't take it home; time-saving (K); time-consuming (K); feeling sometimes overburdened– wanting to go fast(H)

Appendix F: Consent Letter from the Principal of Pathways Community School

November 14, 2002

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

James A. Therrell has permission from the Pathways Community School to conduct research for his dissertation regarding teacher collaboration in the K-1 classroom starting in December of 2002. For his research he has permission to observe, participate, take notes, and use audio tape recording devices, but shall not use video or camera equipment. He also has permission to collect and use documents related to teacher collaboration and to conduct formal interviews and have conversations with staff and the administration at the school,

Sincerely,

Principal of Pathways Community School
Hubble, Texas

Appendix G: Informed Consent Form for Participants

Teacher Collaboration in a Shared Classroom ***IRB#*** _____

Informed Consent to Participate in Research

The University of Texas at Austin

You are being asked to participate in a research study. This form provides you with information about the study. The Principal Investigator (the person in charge of this research) or his/her representative will also describe this study to you and answer all of your questions. Please read the information below and ask questions about anything you don't understand before deciding whether or not to take part. Your participation is entirely voluntary and you can refuse to participate without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Title of Research Study: The Culture of Teacher Collaboration: An Ethnography

Principal Investigator(s) (include faculty sponsor), UT affiliation, and Telephone Number(s):

James A. Therrell, Principal Investigator, Dept. of Curriculum & Instruction, 989-2551
Professor Stuart Reifel, Faculty Sponsor, Dept. of Curriculum & Instruction, 471-4089

Funding source: There is no funding source for this study.

What is the purpose of this study?

This study will be used as my dissertation for the Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction. The purpose of this study is to examine and describe the practice and teachers' construction of teacher collaboration, as well as the interrelationship of classroom and school culture. The number of participants identified at this time is six. Because this study follows the tenets and processes of ethnography (participants not known in the beginning of the study are recruited along the way for perspectives that help clarify or problematize patterns and themes), this number may increase to an additional six participants.

What will be done if you take part in this research study?

I will be asking you to describe your practice and construction of teacher collaboration in a shared classroom. Practice relates to how the you engage, both individually and as a group, in the process of teacher collaboration, including what transpires in order to plan, negotiate, arrange, conduct, support, evaluate, learn about, and develop it over time. Practice also includes the role(s) that each individual plays, the context in which roles develop, the goals that evolve, and the responsibilities assigned and carried out for achieving those goals. Construction relates to the interplay of knowledge and identity that you bring to the practice of teacher collaboration, as well as the context in which knowledge and identity operate.

I will ask your permission to conduct observations and write field notes about teacher collaboration in the classroom and at other school venues before, during, and after school, to average not more than four hours a day. I will ask you for any documents that pertain to teacher collaboration (taking no more than 15 minutes over the course of the study). I will ask you to spend up to an hour writing down your thoughts in response to questions directly related to teacher collaboration. I will ask you to engage in up to eight audio-taped individual interviews and up to four audio-taped focus group interviews, with each interview up to ninety minutes in length (not to exceed a total of 15 hours over the course of the study), conducted at a place of mutual convenience and comfort, either at the school or away from the school. I will ask you to help check each of your interview transcripts and the final draft of the project (prior to submission) for accuracy and to suggest modifications or extensions of any meanings (estimated at five hours). After the initial audio-taped interviews, I may also ask you to engage in informal dialogue (at a mutually agreed upon time and place) or email correspondence of up to five minutes a day (not to exceed a total of three hours over the course of the study). You do not have to answer any question asked of you during this study. The total time for your interviews, document collection, writing, member-checks, and dialoging, will never exceed ninety minutes in any one day, and will not exceed 24 hours over the course of the study.

What are the possible discomforts and risks?

You may be some emotional tension as I write field notes, while responding to questions during interviews, or by the use of an audiotape recorder. This risk will be minimized by an informal, collaborative approach to such procedures, by agreeing upon mutually convenient times and comfortable places, by my previous experience with these techniques, by assuring you of confidentiality, as well as by the rapport that already exists from our previous professional relationship at this school.

A possible risk concerns confidentiality. This risk will be minimized by using pseudonyms for all proper names and locations. Regarding the information above, please feel free to discuss or ask questions now or at any time with me in person or at 989-2551.

What are the possible benefits to you or to others?

The possible benefits for you include the making of new knowledge or knowledge about teacher collaboration that becomes more explicit, and thus more accessible and usable. Such knowledge may be used to better inform your future collaborations, other collaborative relationships at the school, as well as other collaborations that exist elsewhere in education, social services, business, or family contexts. Such benefits may outweigh any slight emotional discomfort experienced by you or any of the participants. Hence, the benefits to you and society are foreseen to outweigh the risks of doing this study.

If you choose to take part in this study, will it cost you anything?

You will not incur any cost in order to take part in this study.

Will you receive compensation for your participation in this study?

You will not receive any compensation for participating in this study.

What if you are injured because of the study?

There are no physical risks, so injuries do not apply to this study.

If you do not want to take part in this study, what other options are available to you?

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You are free to refuse to be in the study, and your refusal will not influence current or future relationships with The University of Texas at Austin or with the NYOS Charter School.

How can you withdraw from this research study and who should I call if I have questions?

If you wish to stop your participation in this research study for any reason, you should contact: Jim Therrell at (512) 989-2551, or Professor Stuart Reifel at (512) 471-4089. Reasons to withdraw might include fear that your confidentiality will be compromised in some way or that you no longer have enough time to participate in the study. You are free to withdraw your consent and stop participation in this research study at any time without penalty or loss of benefits for which you may be

entitled. Throughout the study, the researchers will notify you of new information that may become available and that might affect your decision to remain in the study.

In addition, if you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact Clarke A. Burnham, Ph.D., Chair, The University of Texas at Austin Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, 512/232-4383.

How will your privacy and the confidentiality of your research records be protected?

Authorized persons from The University of Texas at Austin and the Institutional Review Board have the legal right to review your research records and will protect the confidentiality of those records to the extent permitted by law. If the research project is sponsored then the sponsor will also have the legal right to review your research records. Otherwise, your research records will not be released without your consent unless required by law or a court order.

If the results of this research are published or presented at scientific meetings, your identity will not be disclosed.

The cassettes of your audio-taped interviews will be coded so that no personally identifying information is visible on them. All cassettes will be kept in a secure place, a locked file cabinet in my office to which I have the only key, and they will be heard only for research purposes by me. All cassettes will be erased after they are transcribed and coded.

Will the researchers benefit from your participation in this study?

Beyond publishing, presenting the results, or gaining knowledge, I will not benefit from this study.

Signatures:

As a representative of this study, I have explained the purpose, the procedures, the benefits, and the risks that are involved in this research study:

Signature and printed name of person obtaining consent **Date**

You have been informed about this study's purpose, procedures, possible benefits and risks, and you have received a copy of this Form. You have been given the opportunity to ask questions before you sign, and you have been told that you can ask other questions at any time. You voluntarily agree to participate in this study. By signing this form, you are not waiving any of your legal rights.

Printed Name of Subject **Date**

Signature of Subject **Date**

Signature of Principal Investigator **Date**

Appendix H: Heather's Third Bloc Outline

(contact author at jtherrell@sbcglobal.net or 1-800-359-7331)

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VITA

James Alan Therrell was born in Grand Junction, Colorado, on February 22, 1954. After completing his baccalaureate in History at Duke University in 1976, he worked as the legislative aide of a U.S. Senator in Washington, D.C., then as a high school teacher and supervisor of recreation in Durango, CO, until returning to school to earn a Master of Science in Recreation and Leisure Studies at San Francisco State University in 1986. As a student-winner of the North American Tom & Ruth Rivers Scholarship (supported by the National Science Foundation), he attended the International Conference of Leisure Educators in Brazil. From 1986 to the present, he trained over 50,000 participants worldwide in a variety of lesson planning and leadership skills with children as the Executive Director of the National Play Leaders Association. Publishing "How to Play with Kids" in 1989, with a 2nd edition in 1992, he also produced two educational videotapes for teachers. Elected as a national Afterschool Association Board Member in 1997, he served as Chair of Professional Development and as Vice-President, and helped to found their refereed journal. After beginning Ph.D. studies in Early Childhood Education at The University of Texas at Austin in 1998, he won and completed a year-long contract with the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission in 2000 to research and write "Age Determination Guidelines: Relating Children's Ages to Toy Characteristics and Play Behavior" (2002), a document that informs toy manufacturers and consumers about age appropriate labeling for toys. He has taught young children in pre-school and public school, as well as undergraduates, and is married with five daughters and five grandchildren in the Austin area.

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